

PUCK AND LUCK

A CITY IN THE CLOUDS OR THE BALLOON THAT CAME DOWN ON THE FARM

By Berton Berrewé

AND OTHER STORIES



The balloon rose, carrying the two boys with it. The Whitecaps came dashing upon the scene. "Fire!" yelled Jake Pender, their leader. "Save me!" bawled Budd. Jake's answer was to fire at Chauncey.

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A CITY IN THE CLOUDS

OR, THE BALLOON THAT CAME DOWN ON THE FARM

By BERTON BERTREW

CHAPTER I.—Between Life and Death.

"Is it still raining, Budd?"

"Yes, pouring."

"No signs of letting up?"

"None that I could see."

"Well?"

"Well, Chauncey, I didn't see anything nor hear anything. I suppose that's what you want to know?"

"It is."

"They are not in sight yet, that's a sure thing."

"So much the better for us."

"Exactly. It will give you time to make the bullets."

"So it will. I'll do a little pouring on my own account now."

Thus saying, Chauncey Rippingdale lifted the lead pot off the stove. On the brick hearth lay a bullet mould. Into this the boy began pouring the lead. There were six compartments, and when he had made six bullets he took up the mould with a pair of tongs and dropped it in a pail of water. The result was six bullets. Chauncey worked steadily for half an hour. He had over a hundred bullets when he finally put the mould away. Meanwhile Budd Brown was in and out of the farmhouse. Each time he returned his report was the same.

"No sign of them yet, Chauncey. They'll come, though, never you fear."

The scene was a rude farmhouse in the southwestern part of Texas, not far from the Rio Grande river, some twenty miles below El Paso. It was a lonely spot miles from any other house.

Here Mr. Rippingdale, Chauncey's father, had settled two years before, bringing the boy, his only child, with him. During these two years Mr. Rippingdale worked the farm with the help of his son, they two occupying the place alone, for Chauncey's mother had died some years before. Business prospered with the farmer, and all would have gone well with him if he could have kept from drink. This, however, was impossible.

Each visit to El Paso meant a spree, and every time he indulged Mr. Rippingdale became noisy and quarrelsome. Soon he found himself "on the

outs" with every one until at last he was visited by White Caps and warned to leave the State.

Refusing to do this and abandon all he had worked so hard for, Mr. Rippingdale put himself on the defensive. Three times he and Chauncey drove off their midnight assassins, but on the fourth occasion, just one week before the opening of our story, the White Caps came again and Mr. Rippingdale was shot dead.

It was a sad hour for Chauncey when he buried his father on the farm. Twice he had been warned to leave by anonymous letters. Now on this stormy night in came Budd Brown, an orphan boy, who made his living by working for one farmer and another, with the startling intelligence that the White Caps were coming again that night, and that this time they meant business.

"They'll kill you, sure, Chauncey," said Budd. "I heard Jake Pender say that you had been warned often enough, and now they meant to put your farm in the market. You had better get right out."

"I'll go when I get ready, and not a minute before," was Chauncey's stout reply.

So Chauncey began to mould bullets for the old double-barreled rifle, and Budd stayed to keep him company that dismal night.

"I don't believe we shall see them to-night, Budd," said Chauncey. "I reckon the rain has scared them off. Let's lock up and go to bed."

"Don't you do it," replied Budd.

"You still think they'll come?"

"I'm sure of it. The rain won't keep them away."

"Hark! Didn't you hear something then?"

"It does seem to me that I hear horses, but it may be only the wind."

"I'm not going to stay here with danger threatening. I'd as soon meet them in the open as in the house—at any rate, I want to know."

Chauncey put on his hat and coat, slung his rifle over his shoulder and fastened on his powder-horn and bullet-bag. Chauncey opened the door and the boys stepped out on the prairie. It was the blackest kind of a night, and the rain was coming down in torrents. Chauncey's watch ex-

tended until daylight, which came at a little after five o'clock.

At that time Budd was curled up on the hearth rug like a dog sound asleep, but Chauncey had never relaxed his watchfulness for an instant.

"I shall have to give it up," he determined. "I'll go into El Paso to-day and try and get a job so as to earn money enough to get to New Orleans or Galveston. There's no use in staying here any longer."

He arose and, opening the door, went out. It was broad daylight now, and the rain had ceased. Chauncey looked around for White Caps and his heart gave a great bound when in the distance he caught sight of a large party of mounted men riding over the prairies toward the farmhouse.

"They are coming!" he exclaimed. "They only waited for the rain to stop. Budd! Hey, Budd! My! Look at that!"

Turning toward the house, Chauncey raised his eyes and caught sight of something which made him forget the White Caps for the moment.

"Hey, Chauncey! Look at the big balloon!" bawled Budd, appearing at the door and pointing skyward.

It was an unusual sight for the farm, surely. There at no great distance above them was a huge balloon making great dips, but seemingly coming downward. The big gas bag appeared to be in good condition, and fully distended. Chauncey, who was a very intelligent boy and fairly well educated, came to the instant conclusion that the balloon had been caught in some atmosphere current which was forcing it downward, for it certainly did not seem to be descending for lack of gas.

"It will be down on the farm in a moment!" shouted Budd. "What are we going to do?"

"Catch that rope and hold it!" cried Chauncey. "That is, if the White Caps will let us. There they come!"

"Let them go to thunder. Don't believe they are the White Caps anyhow. It's a lot of fellows chasing the balloon."

The boys were both right.

The approaching men were the White Caps, but they had given up all idea of attacking Chauncey now. White Caps invariably work under the cover of darkness. If it hadn't been for the rain these fellows would have been down on the farm long before the balloon came. As it was, they stopped at the tavern, waiting for it to clear. The clearing came too late, and on their way back to their homes they saw the balloon and gave chase.

They were coming now, but without their disguises. It was no longer Chauncey they were after, but the balloon.

"Look out! She's coming down! She'll be here in a moment!" shouted Chauncey, running across the prairie toward the advancing riders, for the balloon was now describing a big curve which it seemed would surely bring it down on the farm. Chauncey was excited, and no wonder. So was Budd. Both boys lost their heads and their good judgment went to the four winds.

The balloon touched the ground between them and the riders, and bounded up again. The White Caps set up a wild shout and spurred their horses on. The balloon rose about forty feet

and struck a cross current of air which sent it back toward the boys, and once more it dipped and came down on the farm.

"Hooray! I've got it!" bawled Budd, seizing hold of the bottom of the car which was made of basket work and had big wicker hoops to aid in fastening it to the ground.

"Let go, you fool!" yelled Chauncey, as Budd clutched at one of these hoops.

The warning came too late, and right on top of it Chauncey did an equally foolish thing, although it must be remembered that it was done in the excitement of the moment with the sole intention of saving the life of his friend. He grasped the long rope which hung from the car and tried to hold the balloon down. He might as well have tried to hold back a railroad train. Instantly the balloon rose, carrying the two boys with it.

"Look! Look! It's the Rippingdale boy!" shouted one of the White Caps, as they came dashing upon the scene.

"Fire!" yelled Jake Pender, their leader. "We may as well do him now as any time. He's done for anyhow as it is!"

"Help! Save me!" bawled Budd.

Jake Pender's only answer was to throw up his rifle and fire at Chauncey, who hung dangling at the end of the rope right above their heads.

CHAPTER II.—Drifting Among the Clouds.

Here was a situation! It is doubtful if ever two boys were so fixed before. The balloon seemed to have made up its mind to have nothing more to do with the farm. The fact was, it had got into the lower currents of the atmosphere and now owing to a sudden change in the wind was on the rise again. Pender's shot had been a miss, and for some reason best known to himself he did not repeat it. As for Chauncey, he scarcely realized that he had been fired at, for his thoughts were wholly fixed upon the fearful danger to which he was exposed.

There is no doubt that it was to his coolness that he owed his escape.

"Try to climb into the car, Budd!" he yelled. "Try and climb up into the car!"

The wind blew his words away, and Budd never heard him, but the boy's own common sense told him to adopt that course. There was nothing else to do, and fortunately the means of doing it were at hand. There were other wicker loops higher up. They were intended to make it easy to get in and out of the car in case of accident. Budd clutched at them with all the desperation of despair, and before he knew it he was in the car. Then he thought of Chauncey, perhaps for the first time. Until that moment he had no idea that the boy was hanging there to the rope.

Leaning over the edge of the car, he caught sight of him. Chauncey was coolly making signals for him to pull in on the rope by an upward movement of his head. Budd seized the rope and pulled for all he was worth. In a moment Chauncey was up under the car, and then it was his turn to clutch at the wicker loops. But Budd had lost his head, and he kept on pulling at the rope. The moment Chauncey's weight was removed from it,

Budd went tumbling over backward, and the next he knew he was sprawling on the floor of the big basket with Chauncey coming over the edge. The reaction was tremendous. Chauncey sank down on the bench which ran around the car, while Budd remained on the floor staring up at him. Meanwhile a wondrous vision lay exposed before the eyes of Chauncey Rippingdale as he leaned over the edge of the car. Chauncey forgot all about the dangers of his situation for the moment. As for the White Caps, they had vanished long ago, and all recollection of the old farm seemed to have gone with them. Chauncey just sat there staring like one in a dream until all at once Budd Brown's voice recalled him to himself.

"Oh, say, Chauncey, are we going to be killed?"

"Not if I know it, Budd. Get up! Take a look here! Beats everything you ever saw."

Budd, with a face as white as death, crawled on the bench and looked over the edge of the car.

"What's them mountains?" he gasped. "I never knew there was mountains in Texas before."

"Texas! Why, we've been in Mexico for fully five minutes. Brace up! We are in for it. Make the best of the situation. Do you know, I rather like this?"

"Gee! How we do go!" gasped Budd, staring up at the big gas bag overhead. "Say, Chaunce, you've got away from the farm anyhow. Jake Pender can't kill you now."

"Yes, away, never to go back again, Budd, but our troubles are not over yet."

"You're right there. S'pose the blame thing busts?"

"That I don't fear."

"I do, though. See how she strains. Gee, if them ropes were to break wouldn't we drop?"

"There's worse than that to fear, Budd. There isn't one chance in a hundred that the cords will break."

"What?"

"That we may be blown clean across Mexico into the Pacific ocean."

"But the Pacific ocean is miles and miles away."

"Yes, and we are going toward it at the rate of dear knows how many miles an hour, and what's more, we don't know the first thing about managing a balloon."

"That's what. How in the world did the blame thing happen to come down on the farm?"

"Don't ever ask me! Somebody was killed before it ever reached us. But we may as well take it easy. Examine into all those traps while I try to find out what these different ropes mean."

Both went to work and inside of the next ten minutes they had learned many things which they did not know before. Hanging suspended from the balloon were the different ropes which controlled the balloon. Chauncey soon got the hang of them. Budd's discoveries were equally important in their way. There were plenty of provisions in the balloon stowed away in baskets and boxes under the seats. There was also a handsome case containing various instruments, thermometers, barometers, a fine compass, and many other singular-looking things, the uses of which the boys could only guess at.

Among other things they found a diary in French. The name on the blank page in front read:

J. FOURNEY, *New Orleans.*"

"And he was the owner of the balloon, no doubt," mused Budd. "Wonder where he is now?"

"Lost in the storm last night," replied Chauncey. "How he got out of the balloon I'll never tell you, but there's no doubt that he's dead."

"Here's a bully rifle, Chaunce!" cried Budd, pulling a handsome Winchester from under the seat.

"My, isn't that a beauty!" exclaimed Chauncey. "Leaves my old double-barrel all in the shade. Any cartridges there, Budd?"

"Yes, here's a whole box full," replied Budd, who was still prowling around under the seat.

"Well, this isn't so bad," said Chauncey. "If we can only land somewhere, I think we had better be getting about it, Budd."

"I'm ready," said Budd. "I've had enough. How is it to be done?"

"Why, we'll pull the valve and let the gas out. I don't know any other way."

"Try it, Chaunce!"

"Not now, by gracious! Here's a bad job! What are we going to do?"

They had suddenly run into a cloud-bank and all in an instant the wonderful nanorama beneath them was wiped out. A damp, drizzling rain began to fall all about them. It drew darker and darker as the balloon sped on.

"This is a bad job, Chaunce. What are we going to do now?" asked Budd, who began to look pretty blue.

"Drop as soon as we can get our bearings. We'll be out of this in a few minutes, I suppose."

But the moments sped on and they did not come out of the clouds. Still it was just the same—even worse! Chauncey tried to work the valve, but was balked at the very start.

CHAPTER III.—The Wreck of the Balloon.

"Budd! Budd! Wake up!"

It seemed rather strange that Budd Brown could go to sleep there in the balloon, but he did.

Along toward morning he laid his head down upon the bench and dropped to sleep. The next thing he knew Chauncey was shaking him, and he sprang up with the indistinct impression that some one had just fired off a cannon close to his ear. Was it a dream? Perhaps, but certainly not all a dream, for as Budd sprang up the clouds were suddenly illuminated with appalling brilliancy, and then came that fearful sound again.

He gave one wild yell of terror, and sprang upon the bench. Chauncey seized him and pulled him down to the floor of the car.

"What would you do?" he demanded. "Did you think of committing suicide? Did you really mean to jump off?"

"Don't know what I meant to do!" gasped Budd. "What's the row, anyhow? What's it all about?"

"Why, it's only a thunderstorm!"

"We are goners, Chaunce!" gasped Budd. "Nothing can save us now."

"Don't give up the ship, Budd."

"'Tain't a ship, it's only a balloon. Confound it! S'pose we get struck?"

"Then there'll be a drop."

A flash of blinding intensity followed closely these words. There was a ripping sound, followed instantly by a sharp hissing, like steam escaping from a boiler.

"It's all up with us! She's busted!" Budd fairly yelled.

Crash! came the thunder.

The balloon lay all over to one side.

"I reckon that one fixed us," panted Chauncey. "We are going down like chain lightning. Oh, Budd! Look there!"

But Budd did not need to be told to look. Another flash of lightning came, and all in the same instant the boys caught sight of a range of mountain peaks below them stretching off to an immense distance, while right beyond the Pacific ocean spread itself westward.

Budd declared that he saw a steamer in the second while the vision lasted.

"Are we going out to sea, Chauncey?" roared Budd.

"I guess we are," replied Chauncey, gloomily. "It looks mighty like it."

"Is there no way of plugging up that infernal old gas bag?"

"Look up there and see for yourself when the next flash comes."

It came a second later. Budd looking up saw something more reassuring. Their course had certainly changed now. He could no longer see the ocean. But the mountain peaks lay right below them. He could see the trees and the outlines of the rocks distinctly. In one place it was all snow, and that not more than a hundred feet below them, it seemed.

This confirmed Chauncey in the belief that he had held from the start.

"We can't have been very high up at any time," he reasoned. "If we had been we should have had more difficulty in breathing."

"Get yourself ready, Budd!" he shouted. "We are going to strike in a minute, that's sure."

"Shall we try to save some of this stuff?" asked Budd. "We may need it before we get through."

"Hold on to the rifle. Put some of those cartridges in your pockets."

While Budd obeyed Chauncey, following out his own advice, slung the old double-barrel gun over his shoulder.

All at once the lightning came again—the longest flash Chauncey had ever witnessed.

"Oh, Chaunce! Look down there!" yelled Budd.

It was most startling. Directly below them lay a great city. There were hundreds of queer-shaped buildings visible, and the streets thronged with men, women and children, every one of them looking up hard at the balloon. As it went flying over their heads a mighty shout went up. Then all at once the vision was blotted out, and the next the boys knew the balloon was bumping on the ground.

"Hold on hard, Budd!" shouted Chauncey. "This is our greatest danger now."

Budd clutched the edge of the car manfully.

"Hadn't we better jump, Chaunce?" yelled Budd.

"No, no! Hold on!" shouted Chauncey.

Once more they rose, but it was only to fall again. This time the balloon came down so hard

as to break Chauncey's hold on the edge of the car.

"Good-by, Budd! I'm a goner!" he shouted, as he tumbled out, and went rolling down over the rocks.

"Chaunce! Chaunce!" he could hear Budd yelling.

But the sound died away in the distance, for the lightened balloon had risen still again and Budd was swept away into the blackness of that awful night.

CHAPTER IV.—The Remarkable Disappearance of Budd Brown.

Chauncey Rippingdale did not fall far. Although he gave himself up for lost when he went rolling down over the rocks he was soon brought up with a round turn by coming against a big boulder. He scrambled up and began shouting for Budd Brown. For some moments Chauncey stood leaning against the boulder trying to realize the situation into which he had fallen. It was despairing enough, surely, yet our hero was not at all the sort of fellow to give up, and in justice to him let us say that his fears were more for Budd than for himself.

"What can have become of him?" he kept saying. "Has he been dropped down into that hole? Is he dead?"

Suddenly a wild shout arose, as if many voices were yelling in chorus, and after that all was still. Chauncey stood transfixed, breathlessly listening. As he stood there listening and wondering the clouds cleared away and the moon came out in all her glory. Chauncey gave a cry of joy, for he saw that the rocks over which he had fallen could be easily ascended.

He scrambled up over the rocks and found himself upon a level tableland stretching off on his left. Far in the distance it seemed to him that he could see houses and towns.

"I've been dropped away up near the top of the Mexican Sierras, that's what," thought Chauncey, who was pretty well posted on geography. "Well, it's better than rolling over the edge of the precipice down there and then being dropped, if there is any comfort in that."

Which way had the balloon gone? This was the next question. Chauncey tried to locate the spot where they had struck the ground, but could not do it. It was while he was thus engaged that the stillness was suddenly broken by a burst of wild unearthly music off in the direction of the supposed buildings, and looking that way he could see a great moving mass of men advancing rapidly over the plain.

They were all advancing toward a long dark line which marked the end of Chauncey's vision, and as he stood watching them the music suddenly ceased and the moving men seemed to melt away.

It looked just as though they had vanished into nothingness. Chauncey looked for them in vain, as he hurried toward the dark line against which they had disappeared.

The stars now came out in all their glory and the last trace of the storm vanished. Chauncey covered the ground in good lively style undis-

turbed by any further strange sights or sounds. As he continued to advance the objects ahead of him seemed to take definite form. He was certainly approaching a large city. He could see the outlines of the buildings distinctly. There were long, low structures standing on high mounds or platforms. There were hundreds of them, and Chauncey remembered a book which he had studied when he was a little boy, somebody's travels in Central America, in which there were pictures of the wonderful views which lie hidden in the forests of Yucatan. The buildings there pictured looked just like those which he could see ahead of him in the moonlight, and he made up his mind that he was coming to an ancient Aztec city, which was quite correct.

All this time he kept looking at the long, dark outline that ended his views, and he suddenly became aware that it was a high wall beyond which he could not see. It ran for a long distance on both sides of him and presently he came to the edge of a steep descent where he could look down upon another part of the city. There were dozens and dozens of smaller buildings here, rude stone structures extending to the base of the wall, which now looked twice as high as it had done before.

The disappearance of that strange band was now accounted for, Chauncey thought. They could have gone down into this hollow and vanished in the way they did.

He had just arrived at this conclusion when a loud shout attracted his attention, and looking down into the hollow he saw running about on the top of a square tower which stood alone and had a height of about sixty feet, a human figure waving its hands and calling out words which nobody could understand at that distance.

"By gracious! I believe that's Budd!" gasped Chauncey. "He's trying to signal me. Yes, it is Budd, as sure as a gun!"

Chauncey was soon able to recognize him and in a few moments more he stood at the foot of the tower.

"Hooray! Hooray!" yelled Budd. "Here's a sight for sore eyes! Oh, Chaunce! I thought you were a goner! Hooray! You're alive!"

And Budd began capering about like a madman, talking so fast that Chauncey could not make out a word he said.

"Oh, shut up, and try and be sensible!" he called up to him. "How did you get there? Did you drop out of the balloon?"

"Yes, I did! I can't get down, either. I landed right on top of this tower—dropped out of the car—see?"

"I wish I could see how to get up to you. It seems all solid here."

"So it is up top here. I suppose I might jump and break my neck."

"Hold on! Don't do anything rash. Say, Budd, did you see that crowd of people here a few minutes ago?"

"Did I see them? Well, I guess I did, and I took mighty good care that they didn't see me. They were Indians, Chaunce, and they had the prettiest white girl with them you ever laid eyes on. Poor thing! She looked awful scared, but I couldn't do nothing for her. They passed right under this tower, went over toward the wall and

passed through it. It's awful strange I don't see no opening now."

"Nor I either," replied Chauncey, looking toward the wall, which rose much higher than the top of the tower. "It seems all solid, but surely you must have been mistaken about the girl being white, Budd."

"No, I wasn't, either! Didn't you hear her holler a little while before that? Didn't you hear them shots?"

"I certainly did."

"Well, then, there you are."

Suddenly Budd gave a yell of terror and disappeared from the top of the tower, his cry seeming to die away in the distance.

"Budd! Budd!" shouted Chauncey.

There was no answer. Again and again Chauncey Rippingdale called his friend, but all was still.

CHAPTER V.—Lost Among the Clouds.

The next few hours were perhaps the most uncomfortable that Chauncey had ever passed. He spent them placing up and down beside the old tower. Morning dawned at last, and it found Chauncey as badly puzzled over the disappearance of Budd as ever. He now had a better chance to look about him, and he saw that he was on the edge of a ruined city of great extent along the line of the wall, but of no great width anywhere.

There was no sign of life anywhere. The ground between the great buildings was a barren waste; the queer structures themselves were in many cases little better than a mass of ruins.

Broken stone, some pieces beautifully sculptured, lay scattered about in all directions. It would have been a great field for an archæologist or an antiquarian, but Chauncey was neither. All he wanted was to solve the mystery of Budd's disappearance, and that seemed about as impossible as anything could be, as he walked on among the ruins.

He turned the corner of a huge mound upon the top of which stood a great stone structure of enormous dimensions, and all at once he saw Budd standing at the top of a flight of stone steps which led up the side of the mound. It was a question of which ran the farthest or shouted the loudest then. The boys met upon a broad platform half way up the side of the mound, and such a hand-shaking never was seen before.

"Do let up, Budd, and tell me how you got here!" cried Chauncey at last; "of course you must know that I've been almost wild."

"Why, it's easy enough explained," laughed Budd, "but I was terribly scared when the stone turned."

"What stone? What do you mean?"

"Why, one of the stones on the roof of the tower. I thought I must have stepped on every one of them, but I couldn't have stepped on that one, for when I did it just turned under me and down I went. I tell you what it is, Chaunce, I was badly scared."

"I suppose you must have been," replied Chauncey. "Where did it land you?"

"Why, it landed me at the top of a flight of

steps and shut up like an oyster. I couldn't get back, and——"

"I suppose you had that little dark lantern we found in the balloon with you, Budd? You put it in your pocket, you know."

"Yes; wasn't it lucky? I'm sure I don't know what I should have done without it. Well, you've guessed how I managed. I lit the lantern and went down to the bottom of those steps and then along a narrow passage all walled in with stone, and then—oh, well, I can't tell it all. It was up steps and down steps and through one passage after another, until at last I came out into that big palace or temple or whatever you have a mind to call it, up here, and, hang it all, I've been looking everywhere for you. Got lost among these blessed old ranches, got back again, and—say, Chaunce, don't you want some breakfast? I've got a bully one for you, if you do."

"Have you gone crazy, Budd? Great Scott! You rattle on like a steam engine. How is a fellow going to get breakfast in a place like this? I'd just made up my mind that I'd got to starve to death."

"You don't have to!" cried Budd. "Come on, Chaunce! You're going to have as fine a breakfast as you ever sat down to. Oh, don't look so surprised. It's true. Just you follow me!"

Budd ran off up the steps and Chaunce followed him. There seemed to be just no end to the wonders of this strange structure, which being the case, we don't propose to attempt any further description of them. Budd brought up at last in a small room which opened out from a terrace in the rear of the great temple.

"There!" he exclaimed, pushing aside a curtain which had been hung in front of the door. "There, what do you think of that?"

"Somebody's camp," said Chauncey. "Well, this is great!"

"That's just what it is," replied Budd. "See all them boxes? Well, they are just full of grub and specimens, pieces of broken dishes and little stone heads and every old thing. See, here's all kinds of pots and pans for cooking, and there's coffee in this bag, and here's the grinding mills, and there's canned goods till you can't rest, and bread and crackers and cheese, and three bully rifles over there under them coats, and——"

"Stop! Stop!" cried Chauncey. "You make my ears tired, you rattle on so. Well, by gracious, Budd, this is a find! Why, we can live for weeks here, but what about water?"

"Plenty at the foot of the steps. As nice a spring as ever you saw. Oh, Chaunce, who could all this have belonged to? Where is the feller? This is the queerest old ranch. You are always running against something new."

Here was another mystery. All day long they wandered about this mysterious city high up in the Sierras among the clouds, but when they lay down to rest at night they were no wiser than when they started on their explorations, except in one particular.

They were hemmed in. On all sides the wall towered high above their heads, except on the east, and there was the precipice. The wall was built of great blocks set together without cement, and so skillfully done that you could not put a knife blade between the stones.

As far as he could understand their situation, they were prisoners there in that strange city away up among clouds, which, as night came on, settled down upon the ruined temple, enveloping everything in a thick, damp fog. Morning came and brought no change. When Chauncey got up and went out on the broad terrace, the fog was thicker than ever.

"What in the world are we to do?" he thought. "It doesn't look as though we should ever get out of this. Look at it any way you will, we are lost among the clouds."

CHAPTER VI.—The Seven Golden Suns.

The first thing Chauncey did when he re-entered the stone chamber was to grind coffee and cut some ham. Budd, being woke up, threw some dry wood on the fire—there was quite a pile of it in one corner of the room—and it was not long before the boys had a good breakfast ready, and having disposed of it, they felt in better shape to begin the labors of another day.

"What's the programme this morning, Chaunce?" asked Budd.

"To find our way down off this mountain. That's the programme first, last and all the time," was the reply.

Once more they went the length of the wall, examining every inch of it, but no break was discovered. Still they met with an adventure which is certainly worth noting here. Away down at the lower end of the wall, that is, the end furthest away from the ruined temple—rose a tall pyramid crowned with a small stone building, the roof of which was above the wall.

"Queer that they should have built that house up there, and left no way of reaching it," remarked Chauncey, pausing in front of the pyramid when they came up to it this time.

"Just what I was thinking," said Budd. "I'll bet you what you like there's steps inside."

"But there's no opening."

"Not on this side, but there may be on the other."

It was not altogether easy to explore the other side of the pyramid, for here another building had fallen against it and great stones were piled up helter-skelter. The boys scrambled over them, and to their great satisfaction came upon a low doorway opening into the pyramid, which had been so concealed by the stones that one could not see it from the ground.

"Bully!" cried Budd. "This is our chance. Hold on till I light my little lantern."

But Chauncey was too impatient to wait. He went through the door, and before Budd could get in with his lantern he was calling out that he had found a stairway.

"Let me get ahead. We want a light," said Budd, and up the stone steps they hurried, only to meet disappointment in the end. The steps ended abruptly against a huge flat block of stone.

"Well!" exclaimed Budd; "this beats the band! The fellows who built this city must have been a lot of lunatics. What in the world did they make these steps for, if they meant to have them lead nowhere?"

"Hold on, Budd," said Chauncey. "We don't

understand their ideas—remember. Flash your light on this wall here. Yes, I thought so. It's a door!"

It was a big stone set in the wall and projecting out enough to make it look different from the rest. Chauncey pushed against it and it swung around on a pivot. The next the boys knew they were standing on a long chamber lined with massive stone columns on either side. Each column was sculptured in the shape of an Indian, and each was different; some had tall feather head dresses and others long hair hanging down over the shoulders, all exquisitely carved in stone, while at the end of the chamber was an altar upon a raised platform with a number of curious round objects hanging above it fastened against the wall like shields.

"By gracious, we've struck it rich now!" cried Chauncey. "Look, Budd! Those things are gold!"

"Yes, and what about them pieces of glass stuck in all over them, Chaunce?"

Budd ran forward, flashing his lantern toward the end of the chamber, but it was not until they got up on the platform that Chauncey realized the immense value of the discovery they had made.

"They are gold fast enough!" he exclaimed. "They represent the sun, Budd. Seven of them. Seven golden suns, and your bits of glass are only diamonds! Great Scott, there's a fortune here if a fellow could only get away with it. This is great!"

Budd stared up at the big golden suns with wide-open eyes.

"Wh, there's hundreds of them glass-points, Chaunce!" he cried. "Are you sure they are diamonds?"

"Don't they look like 'em? See how they glitter and flash back the light?"

"Gee! If we can get away with them it will make us millionaires!"

"Hardly that, but—hush! Didn't you hear something?"

"Blest if I didn't!" gasped Budd. "There's someone under the floor."

"A dull rasping sound could be distinctly heard, and all at once a heavy blow was struck under the floor right before the raised platform.

"Shut off that light, Budd!" breathed Chauncey. "Drop down behind the altar here."

They were none too soon. Peering out on each side of the big altar the boys saw one of the floor stones slowly rise and a tall Indian nearly naked, and wearing an elaborate head-dress of feathers sprang lightly into the chamber, holding a flaring torch in his hand. Thrusting this into a hole in the floor, he turned, bent over the hole and drew up a young white girl of considerable beauty. Her eyes were closed and she seemed to be asleep or dead, the astonished boys could not tell which. Another Indian followed, holding the girl's feet. Together they bore her toward the altar behind which the boys were concealed.

Brown never found out. Giving Budd the tip to draw in his head so that he need not be seen, Chauncey prepared for business. The Indians walked straight up to the altar, carrying the girl between them and laid her down upon the big flat stone behind which the boys were crouching. They never spoke a word, and before they had time to make another move Chauncey and Budd jumped up and tackled them. It was a clever knock-out and no mistake. Chauncey seized his Indian by the throat, drove his knee into the pit of his stomach, and before the fellow had time to give more than one howl he was sprawling on his back in front of the altar, while Budd had landed his man with one blow between the eyes. Budd's man seemed to be unconscious, but the other began sputtering away in his own language.

Whether he was begging for mercy or not, Chauncey did not stop to find out. The Indian made no move to attack him, or even to get up off the floor, which gave the boys everything their own way. Chauncey was as quick to act as he always was when necessity required it.

"Here, help me with the girl, Budd!" he exclaimed. "We'll run her right out before more of those fellows come."

So Chauncey taking the girl by the shoulders and Budd taking the feet, they carried her across to the opening through which they had entered the great hall of the pyramids. The Indian whom Chauncey had knocked down scrambled to his feet and watched them. He made no move to interfere, but just before they reached the door Chauncey, looking back, saw him crawl on his hands and knees to the open trap door. Suddenly he gave one wild cry and disappeared through the trap, leaving his unconscious companion where he lay.

"That means trouble for us later on, and don't you forget it," remarked Budd.

"Hold your horses. We have got enough to do with the present trouble," replied Chauncey. "A little higher, Budd. Be careful while we are going through the passage. We don't want to hurt the poor thing."

"Is she dead, do you think?" asked Budd, anxiously.

"More than I can tell you. She seems to be the same girl I saw the Indians carrying off the other night."

"Oh, she is, I am sure of it. Queer start, isn't it, Chaunce? How in the world do you suppose she came here?"

"Give it up. We shall have to wait till she comes to her senses before we know much about it."

"We had better get her to the old temple. She will be more comfortable there."

It was good hard work getting the girl down over the stones, and before they reached the temple they had to lay her down and stop many times to rest. At last they reached the rooms at the top of the steps and all out of breath with their exertions, placed the girl on a pile of blankets near the hearth where they soon had a good fire blazing.

"There!" exclaimed Chauncey. "We have done all we can. If she is ever going to come back to life this will be her chance."

CHAPTER VII.—At the Ringing of the Bell.

Just what the two Indians meant to do with the unconscious girl Chauncey Rippingdale and Budd

They waited all night. Chauncey never slept a wink, although Budd did along toward morning.

Forty times or more Chauncey bent over that beautiful face and watched the regular breathing. Again and again he tried to awaken the girl by shaking her and by calling in her ears, but it was all in vain. With the coming of the sun the clouds cleared away, much to the boy's relief.

"What are we going to do; stay here and watch that girl forever?" asked Budd, with his mouth full. "I don't know what you think about it, Chauncey, but it seems to me pretty blamed slow work."

"I was just thinking that perhaps there was no need of it," replied Chauncey. "The Indians don't seem to come here. If they were in the habit of doing so all these things would not have been left in this room."

"That's so. What about them golden suns and the diamonds?"

"Great minds think alike, Budd; that was just what was running through my head."

"We want them, of course."

"You bet we do. If we are ever lucky enough to get out of this place they must go with us. Suppose we leave the girl where she is, make a dash over to the temple and get the suns and hurry back again?"

It was only a short distance striking across among the ruins as they did now, instead of following around by the wall. There was no sign of life anywhere. They climbed up over the stones and groped their way through the passage. The place was deserted. The Indian beside the altar had disappeared.

"There isn't no one here, Chauncey," said Budd. "There doesn't seem to be anything to hinder us from busting right ahead."

The boys waited a few moments silently listening, and then went up on the raised platform and stood before the seven golden suns.

"We can never carry away more than one at a time, that's certain," declared Chauncey, examining the nearest. "They are big, bulky things. You can handle one and another, but that's all we can possibly do."

"Wonder if they are going to come off the wall easy?" said Budd, catching hold of the nearest of the suns and giving it a pull.

Instantly a deep-toned bell rang out through the dismal old hall.

"Gosh! What's that?" cried Budd, drawing back.

"Look! Look!" whispered Chauncey, grasping his rifle.

From behind each one of the great stone images Indians came stealing out silently and with noiseless tread. They were armed with bows and arrows. In a moment fully fifty of them had gathered before the altar and stood facing the astonished boys.

Chauncey gave himself up for lost, and there is not the least doubt that Budd was scared half out of his wits. All at once the foremost of the band, a tall, slim Indian, with nothing on but a breech cloth and the skin of some animal thrown over his shoulders, threw up his hand with a shrill cry. Instantly every bow went up and a shower of arrows came flying toward the boys.

"Dodge down, Budd!" gasped Chauncey.

He dropped behind the altar. So did Budd. It was a lucky move, for all in an instant the boys saw their chance. The altar instead of being the solid block of stone they had supposed it, and as it certainly looked to be when crouched behind it the day before, now presented a very different appearance. There was an opening in its side big enough for a man to crawl through.

"In with you, Budd! There may be a way of escape here!" Chauncey cried, pushing Budd into the dark hole.

He scrambled in after him to find Budd already on a flight of stone steps leading down under the altar. Chauncey lighted his lantern and hurried down the steps after Budd, finding him standing upon a broad landing some fifty or more steps down waiting for him to come.

"Are they following us, Chauncey?" he asked. "I don't hear them at all."

"Nor do I. Strange! I thought they would come right after us."

"They'll do it or they'll head us off sure."

"Well, we'll be ready for them. They can only attack us one or two at a time here. We would have been dead by this time if we had remained where we were."

"Sure! What are we going to do now?"

"Explore this place to the end, I suppose. We've got to, seeing that we can't get out."

"Yes; and we didn't even get one of the golden suns, which makes me tired," growled Budd. "Just as soon as I laid my hand on the first one that blamed old bell began to ring. Can't understand where it was or what it meant, but it brought them Indians out like a swarm of bees. Here, cut in ahead, Chauncey. You've got the lantern, so you'd better lead the way."

Budd was rattling on as usual. He was one of the kind who would have a lot to say even if he was dying, but Chauncey understood him perfectly, and paid little attention to him. Just beyond the platform the steps took a strange turn.

First they went off to the right and then to the left, and then with a great sweep they turned upward and led straight on.

"This is going to take us up into that little building on top of the pyramid," declared Chauncey, and so it proved.

At last they came hard up against a big flat stone just as they had done in the case of the steps on the other side of the pyramid, but unlike that, when Chauncey pressed against this stone it began to move and went swinging around, leaving an opening through which the boys could easily climb.

They now found themselves in the little building on top of the pyramid. The room into which they had penetrated was bare of all furnishing except a great number of big earthen pots which stood ranged around the wall. Each pot was sealed with a piece of hide and securely tied down.

CHAPTER VIII.—Where the Balloon Came Down.

Not a word was spoken. The Indians, grouping together, stood staring at the boys and the boys back at them.

Looking out through the open door, Chauncey saw that they were right on a level with the top of the wall. He could not see over it, but it was evident that if they could get on the roof of the building they would be able to do so. There was no trouble about this, either. Over in one corner a rude ladder stood leaning against the wall leading up to an open trap door or scuttle.

"Hooray!" cried Budd, taking in all their surroundings at a glance. "We shall find out what's over there on the other side of that blessed old wall now, Chaunce. Come on! I'm just dying to know."

"Wait," said Chauncey. I want to see what's in these jars first."

"Oh, hang the jars! I want to find out what's on the other side of the wall."

"One thing at a time," said Chauncey, coolly, and he pulled out his knife, cutting away the piece of raw hide from the mouth of one of the jars.

"Bah! Bones!" he exclaimed. "They don't smell very sweet, either."

"Just what I expected. They are all alike, of course; all full of old bones! Come on, Chaunce. Now for the wall."

But Chauncey was not satisfied. He determined to investigate the jar more thoroughly. Lifting it, he turned it bottom upward and a lot of dry bones rolled out upon the floor. Last came a skull with a mass of long, black hair attached to it, and then out fell some twenty small shining objects.

"Diamonds!" cried Chauncey. "By gracious, they are surely diamonds! Oh, Budd! Look here!"

But Budd wasn't there to look. He could not restrain his impatience so he had gone on up the ladder and his head was already through the trap door.

"Chaunce!" he yelled, looking down into the room. "Oh, Chaunce! Here's the balloon!"

CHAPTER IX.—What Was on the Other Side of the Wall.

Chauncey had made a big discovery, Budd had made another, and there was another still to come. If all the jars contained diamonds as well as bones here was a fortune ready to hand. No wonder Chauncey was excited, but Budd's discovery had to be attended to first, and besides there was the wall and its mystery to be solved.

"I'll come right up, Budd!" he called, and he stopped only to listen at the stairs. There was no sound below. Strange as it seemed they were evidently not being followed by the Indians.

Budd had now gone up on the roof and Chauncey hurried after him, but the mystery of the wall would not yield itself up so easily. There was a parapet ten feet high running all around the roof which was made of solid blocks of stone. There lay the wreck of the balloon lodged in one corner of this enclosure, and Budd was engaged in pulling over the stuff in the car. The big gas bag had pretty well collapsed, but it did not seem to be very badly torn. As for the car, it was not hurt a bit, although it had tangled itself up pretty badly in the ropes which attached it to the balloon.

"She's all here, Chaunce!" cried Budd, "and here's the biggest part of our stuff, too. I don't miss but a few things."

"That's the talk! It's a big find for us!" replied Chauncey. "We've got grub enough to last us for months, what with the stuff we have over in the old ruin and what there is here."

"You bet we have. What's that you were saying about diamonds, Chaunce?"

"Yes, you seem to care more about grub than diamonds. Look here, Budd!"

Chauncey held up the little handful of glittering stones taken from the jar.

"By gracious, they look like diamonds!" cried Budd. "Where did you get them?"

"They came out of that old jar from among the bones."

"You don't mean it! Any more in the other jars?"

"Well, I haven't examined those yet. I shouldn't be at all surprised, though."

"This is great! You are sure they are diamonds?"

"Well, I won't be sure, but I feel pretty certain about it. Confound this wall! We don't get the view that I expected."

"No, but what's the matter with getting on top of it?"

"More than you can do, Budd. These stones are as smooth as glass, but if I can reach the top of the wall."

"Do it, then, and take one of the ropes out of the balloon with you to pull me up by. Won't we be making a show of ourselves to the Indians, though?"

"Yes, if they are down there, but I don't believe they are. We'll take our chances, anyhow. I'm not going to give it up here until I know what there is on the other side of the big wall."

So Chauncey got one of the spare ropes out of the car and tied it around his waist. Then Budd stood up against the wall and Chauncey managed to climb upon his shoulders. He was just able to reach the top of the parapet. Grasping it firmly, he gave a spring which nearly knocked Budd over, and in a moment was standing on the top.

"Oh, Budd!" he shouted. "Oh, look here! By gracious, I never would have believed it! Oh, this is great!"

"Get a fellow up! What is it you see?" Budd called out.

"A city! A thundering big city on the other side of the wall!" shouted Chauncey.

Budd could scarcely wait for Chauncey to let down the rope. When it came he hurried to make it fast under his arms and Chauncey pulled away. It was dead weight and hard work, but he managed it all right and Budd was soon on the top of the wall.

The sight which met his gaze as he looked off from the broad parapet was startling indeed. It was easy to see over the wall now. Beyond lay a broad plain, a continuation of the tableland upon which the ruined city stood. There was an unoccupied space of about half a mile immediately on the other side of the wall, and then came the city. It was a wonderful thing. The boys could not see anything like streets nor any horses or vehicles. The big buildings looked as if they had been dropped down from the clouds; they stood at all sorts of angles in reference to each

other, and the space between them was occupied by small huts and fairly swarmed with Indians, coming and going, but they were too far away for any sound to reach the ears of the boys. So it was just like a pantomime, and Chauncey and Budd stood there watching it all for a good twenty minutes without speaking a word. They were in an old and dead city away up among the clouds, but these people were in a newer and living city on the other side of the wall, going on about their business, attending to their own affairs without ever giving them a thought.

"Well, upon my word, this is great!" Budd exclaimed at last. "If those folks ever break loose and get after us, Chaunce, we shall stand but a small show of escaping."

"Hello, up dere; Hello!" rang out from below. "By Chimminy Christmas! Who vas you fellers, anyhow? Vat you doing dere up on top of dot house?"

CHAPTER X.—The Balloon Goes Up Again.

"Great Scott! Who spoke then, Chaunce?" cried Budd Brown, as the call came from the foot of the pyramid.

"Just what I'm trying to find out," replied Chauncey, who was looking down with his eyes roaming here, there and everywhere.

"I can't see anybody."

"No more can I."

"Sounded like a German."

"That's what it did. Strange we can't see him. Wait till I give him the call."

"Hello down there! Hello!" Chauncey shouted. "Where are you? Show yourself, whoever you are!"

"Vell, am I den so small dat you cannot see me already yet?" answered the voice. "Here I was ride under your nose."

"There he is, sure enough! Look! A dwarf!" shouted Budd.

He pointed to a big pile of broken stones which lay at the foot of the pyramid, and there, seated upon it, Chauncey saw the oddest little man he had ever laid eyes on. He was scarcely five feet high, but very stout and wore a big, bushy beard, which came down almost to the tops of a pair of huge cavalry boots, which reached up almost to his waist.

Chauncey's face was on the broad grin as he looked at him and Budd broke out with a boisterous laugh.

"Hello, boots! Where in thunder did you drop from?" he shouted; "out of the clouds?"

"No, but I t'ink you did," was the reply. "I know dere was no way of getting up dere. I try him many times mine own self."

"You're right. That's just what we did," replied Chauncey. "Wait a bit and you will see how we did it, but tell us who you are."

"Vell, my name was not Boots, it was Von Katzenmeyer," was the reply. "I was de cook—Katzenmeyer, de cook. Mebbe you haf heard tell of me?"

"Never!" replied Chauncey. "I suppose my early education has been neglected, but I never have. Who do you cook for, Katzenmeyer, and how did you come to be here?"

The dwarf laughed. "Vell," he said, "you ask

me von question und I ask you anoder, so ve nefer geds novere. Now, listen and ve vill take von t'ing at a time. I vas de cook for Professor Ponti und his daughter, Clara. Ve come up here mit an Indian guide to explore de ruined city. Ve get along all ride till de nide before last de Indians came out of de city over dere on de oder side of de vall. My schimney Creemas, but ve haf a hot fight. De professor he vas killed, mebbe, I dunno. Juan, our guide, he vas shot for sure, und Miss Clara she was captured. I, Katzenmeyer, de cook, tumbled down over de rocks und I have been efer since getting back again. Dat's my story, young shentlemen. Now vat is yours?"

"Why, we came here in a balloon on the same night," called Chauncey.

"In a bailcon! Now dat vas von big lie!"

"Nothing of the sort. Just you wait till we show you!" cried Chauncey. "You'll find out that we are giving it to you straight."

"I vish it was straight. If you had a balloon den mebbe ve might ged owit by dis place und make it straight. I don't vant to stay here now—no! De professor is dead und Mees Clara has gone to de Indians. Vat de blazes good ees it for me to stop here, but I can't find de way owit?"

"Say," called Chauncey, pointing off toward the ruined temple where they had left the sleeping girl, "if you go over to that building, Katzenmeyer, I think you will find Miss Clara. We rescued her from the Indians, but she's been drugged or something, for she was asleep when we found her and she's been asleep ever since."

"My Shimeny Creemas! You don't tell me dot!" yelled Katzenmeyer. "Is she sleeping dere now?"

"She is."

"Hooray! Hooray! Good poy! See you later, poys!"

Away he went, paddling over the rough ground in his big boots, looking for all the world like a freak escaped from some dime museum. Chauncey called after him to stop, for he had other things to ask about, but it was no sort of use.

"See you later, poys!" Katzenmeyer called back again and then disappeared among the ruined buildings, leaving Chauncey and Budd to make the best of their situation. This Chauncey started to do at once.

"Jump down on the roof, Budd," he exclaimed. "We must go right to work to get out of this camp, and I think we can do it by means of the balloon."

Budd gave the jump and Chauncey followed him.

"I don't see what you can do with that old busted balloon," the former remarked.

"That's because you don't understand the situation, Budd. The balloon isn't as far gone as you think for. I found out a few things while we were making our trip through the clouds that I didn't tell you."

"Tell 'em now, then."

"No; it would take too much time to explain and I want to get out of this snap just as quick as possible. Do as I tell you now and we'll talk it all over afterward."

"All right," replied Budd, in his usual cheerful fashion, "anything you say goes, Chaunce."

"Then get down through the trapdoor and burst open all those old pots and see if you can't find more diamonds while I work on the balloon. I think I can make it rise for a moment or two and when she drops again it will land us on the ground."

"Bully for you, Chauncey! A blame good scheme, if you can only do it."

"I'll try, anyhow. Get to your diamond hunting now."

Budd scrambled down the ladder and Chauncey turned his attention to the balloon. He had noticed that the big gas bag was not altogether collapsed.

"I believe there's gas enough left in it yet to make it rise," he murmured. "If I can only get it started I believe it would go over the parapet, wobble about a bit and then drop on the ground."

He took a piece of strong cord out of his pocket and securely tied up the hole, gathering up the loose ends of the oiled silk most carefully as he did so. First the string slipped off, but the second time he was able to make a secure job of it.

The balloon immediately began to straighten up. Chauncey thought he was going to lose it for the moment, but the goods in the car were sufficient to hold it down.

"Hello, Chauncey! More diamonds in the second jar!" shouted Budd from the bottom of the ladder.

"Bully for you. Tackle another."

"I'm going to. How are you getting along with the balloon?"

"All right. I'll fix her so she'll rise."

"By gracious, if you can't do it nobody can!" answered Budd, and he went to work on the next jar.

Chauncey meanwhile continued fussing with the balloon. He first took the spare rope which he and Budd had used on the wall and then, tying one end to the car, made the other fast to the top round of the heavy ladder.

"That ought to hold it," he muttered. "Now to lighten her up."

He got into the car and began tossing out the various packages, many of which he had never yet examined. His intention was to throw them over the wall and pick them up afterward. The plan was all right, but it was never carried out.

The first thing Chauncey knew he heard something snap and the balloon began rising in the air.

"Great Scott! There's more power left in the old bag than I thought for!" gasped Chauncey. "What in the world am I to do?"

There was one thing he could not do and that was to jump out of the car. There was no time for that. The rope had parted and the balloon was rapidly rising. All in an instant it was over the edge of the parapet soaring away toward the mysterious city on the other side of the great wall.

CHAPTER XI.—Above the City in the Clouds.

Chauncey's face was a study as he bent over the edge of the car and looked down. He was a pretty smart sort of a fellow in his way, but he still had lots to learn and the one thing he now

realized was that he knew very little about balloons. The big gas bag swung around and took a turn back over the old building on top of the pyramid. There was poor Budd on the roof with both hands up yelling something which he could not understand. Before Chauncey had time to answer him—and it is not at all likely that Budd would have heard him if he had—the balloon was seized by another cross current and away it went back toward the big wall. Chauncey was in despair.

Here he was utterly unable to control the movements of the balloon moving steadily in the direction of that city among the clouds. He soon saw, however, that the balloon had exercised all the power it possessed. It rose to the height of about a hundred feet and hung there. All that was needed was to have the wind die out to bring it to the ground again, but there was just enough wind to keep it moving and Chauncey traveled on. Anxious as he was he could not help feeling an intense interest in the strange scene which lay below him. In a few moments he had passed over the open space and was above the mysterious city. The streets swarmed with people all looking up at him and shouting in an unknown tongue. On the roofs of the big buildings they were running about, pointing to the balloon and calling out to each other. Chauncey shouted back to them and took off his hat and waved it, carried away by the excitement of the moment.

"If I drop down among them it will be all day with me," he thought, "but what am I to do?"

The thought had no more than crossed his mind when a strong gust of wind from the northwest came sweeping down upon him and caught the balloon. It swayed violently, turning half over on its side. Wild yells went up from the crowd below as Chauncey clutched the side of the car and held on desperately. Then the balloon swung around, flew back over the big wall, swept over the ruined city and was driven toward the precipice with fearful speed. Chauncey was terribly frightened.

"This settles it!" he gasped. "I shall never see poor Budd again."

It certainly looked so. Even his own fate was doubtful. But suddenly the wind died out altogether and the balloon began to drop down into a deep valley beyond the precipice. All Chauncey could do was to watch and wait. He realized that if once he got into the valley the balloon could never rise out of it. A moment more of anxiety and then another change came. A cross current struck the balloon and drove it further up the valley, and as it rounded a sharp point of rocks Chauncey saw that here was a broad, level stretch where a portion of the wall of the precipice retreated a hundred feet or so. There was a man standing on this curious shelf; he was dressed in a tourist's suit and had a rifle slung over his shoulder. He threw up his hands in amazement as he caught sight of the balloon, which came skimming toward him close to the ground, with the broken rope dangling.

"Don't touch it unless you want to get in the same fix I'm in!"

"Haven't you an anchor?" shouted the man. "If you would throw one out you'd catch against the rocks over there."

"Haven't got one!" replied Chauncey, and that was the last he had a chance to say.

A moment later and the balloon was swept against the wall of rock. It struck it with considerable force, rebounded and then came against the rocks again. This time the rope caught in a crevice of the ledge, the force of the balloon pulled it into a still narrower crack and wedged it so tightly that the balloon held fast not ten feet above the ground. Chauncey gave one spring over the edge of the car and landed on his feet. The man with the rifle was running toward him.

"For heaven sake don't let the balloon get away," he shouted. "I wouldn't lose it for a thousand dollars. It's the chance of a lifetime. Hold on to the rope."

CHAPTER XII.—Budd and the Golden Sun.

Budd was scared almost to death when he saw Chauncey go sailing away in the balloon. The thought of being left alone drove him wild.

"I must get out of this Indians or no Indians," he gasped. "Suppose I never see Chauncey again? Oh, gee! What shall I do?"

He hastily gathered up the diamonds which had come out of the jars—he found some in both that he examined—and thrusting them into his pocket, ran down the steps two at a time, never stopping until he was under the altar once more. Here he paused all out of breath and listened. There was nothing to be heard. The only sound which reached Budd's ears was the rapid beating of his own heart. He cautiously pushed back the slide and peered out, crawling through the hole a moment later. There was no one to be seen in the great hall. There were the seven golden suns glittering as bright as ever in the lantern's light. But frightened as he was at the desperate situation Budd could not resist the desire to pull one down. He went for the nearest—the one which he had touched before and which brought the ringing of the bell.

"I'll have this anyhow," he muttered, and, seizing it with both hands, Budd gave a tremendous pull, wrenching the sun away from its fastenings. It came off in his hand, and so suddenly that he tumbled over backward and fell sprawling on the floor.

"Clang! Clang! Clang!" went the bell again.

Budd gave a yell of terror and scrambled up to find the Indians crowding into the hall. There was no escape this time. In an instant half a dozen of them were upon him and the golden sun was wrenched out of his hand. There was the tall Indian, the same one whom he had seen before standing close beside him. He said something in a low voice and Budd was instantly seized, jerked to his feet and dragged in front of the altar. Two Indians picked him up and, in spite of his struggles, threw him on top of the big stone.

"They are going to do me up now," thought poor Budd, sick with horror.

It looked so, indeed. One of the Indians drew a sharp stone knife and raised it above Budd's heart. In a moment it would have descended, but the tall Indian caught the arm of his companion and pulled him back, speaking rapid words.

"Say, let up on me, won't you?" cried Budd.

"I'll get out of here and I won't come back again, you bet!"

The tall Indian laughed, displaying a glittering row of white teeth. Thrusting his hand in under the skin which half covered his body, he drew out a small vase of peculiar form and dashed a portion of its contents into Budd's face. It felt cold and smelled not unlike cologne water. Instantly Budd's head began to reel and the faces of the Indians about him grew dim. He was sleepy—oh, so sleepy! Twice he made a desperate effort to rouse himself, but it was no use. Then all in an instant it seemed to him he was wide awake, but the situation had changed as completely as if touched by some fairy's wand. Budd now found himself walking along among the big buildings of the mysterious city which he had seen on the other side of the wall. His hands were tied together and there were many Indians moving in front of him. On one side walked the beautiful girl whom he and Chauncey had left sleeping in the old temple, while on the other side the odd little German was shuffling along in his big boots and behind came an immense crowd of Indians shouting and hooting and making the air fairly ring with their wild cries. Budd gave a gasp, caught his breath and looked from one face to another.

"So you was waked up, was you?" exclaimed Katzenmeyer. "Donnervetter, but you valk in your sleep about as vell as I can ven awake. Mees Clara, dis is dot young man vot I tell you about. I vould introduce him all ride if I knowed his name."

The girl smiled sadly.

"We seem to be in dreadful trouble," she said, in a low, musical voice. "They drugged you, too didn't they? How did you come to be in this place?"

"Blest if I know how I came here, miss," gasped Budd. "I'm glad you've waked up, though. I thought you were dead."

"I wish I was!" exclaimed the girl, bitterly. "I wish I was dead and with my father, but I shall soon be. We need not expect to escape."

"By shiminy Cressmas! Look up dere!" yelled Katzenmeyer. "Dere's de boss in a balloon!"

Budd gave a shout, too, as he turned his head upward. There was the balloon sailing over them. Chauncey was looking down out of the car and there was a stranger at his side.

"My father! Oh, he's alive!" screamed the girl.

"Budd! Hey, Budd!" called Chauncey. "Brace up, old man! We are going to save you! Never you fear!"

CHAPTER XIII.—Chauncey's Lucky Escape.

The sudden appearance of Chauncey Rippingdale and the gentleman who accompanied him in the balloon most effectually turned the tide of affairs in the mysterious city in the clouds. The Indians set up a wild shout and ran off right and left with cries of terror, leaving Budd, Clara Ponti and Katzenmeyer to themselves. Evidently they regarded the balloon as some avenging god come down from heaven to rescue the prisoners, and it was equally evident that so long as they made their own escape from the terrible aerial monster the Indians did not care whether their

prisoners were rescued or not. Budd and Katzenmeyer were quick to take advantage of the chance thus offered.

"Can you get us? Shall we follow you, Chauncey?" the former yelled.

"Yes, follow us. We are going to land," shouted Chauncey.

"That's my father!" cried Clara.

"Dat's de great Professor Ponti, shust de most famous scientist in de world!" echoed Katzenmeyer, as they ran on after the balloon between two immensely long buildings standing on high terraces.

The tops of the terraces were crowded with the frightened Indians, all staring at the balloon, the women and children uttering dismal cries. A few of the bolder ones threw spears at the balloon, but fortunately none reached it or Chauncey's fine plans might have been brought to a sudden and disastrous finish. Meanwhile Professor Ponti was working the balloon with wonderful skill. He seemed to be entirely able to control its movements. He pulled this rope and that and the balloon descended with a mighty sweep, touching the stone pavement between the terrace steps just as Budd and his companions came up.

"In with you all!" cried Chauncey. "We can't hold on here! In quick!"

The balloon was skimming along over the pavement and Budd tried to help Clara in but failed.

"I can't do it alone!" he cried.

"Oh, dear me! What shall I do, father?" screamed Clara. "I'm afraid to catch hold of the basket. It will throw me down!"

Chauncey leaped out and lent a hand. He and Budd lifted Clara into the moving car, Professor Ponti giving his assistance above. Meanwhile Katzenmeyer had climbed in without waiting to see if any one else got in or not. The balloon was beginning to rise.

"In with you, boys! In with you!" shouted Professor Ponti. "I can't hold her down!"

Budd sprang up, caught the car and swung himself over the edge of the big basket, but Chauncey in his efforts to do the same, was thrown on his face and the balloon went soaring above the city. It was very unfortunate and a sudden change in the wind, so common on mountain tops, was the cause. To his dismay Chauncey saw the balloon moving back over the great wall in the direction which it had come, and the Indians saw it, too. Instantly a cry went up which seemed to increase into a mighty roar and hundreds of armed natives made a rush down the steps of the various terraces.

"They have got me! I'm lost!" thought Chauncey, and he started off and ran like a deer toward the wall, a portion of which, owing to a turn which it took, was at no great distance away. He had but little hope that this would save him, however, for he had not the faintest idea of how he was going to get on the other side of the wall, but as it turned out, this was only another illustration of the wisdom of making some move in a case of this kind, for even before he reached the wall he saw his chance. Outside the wall there was no sign of a break anywhere, but as Chauncey drew near he saw here on the inside a distinct gateway with a half naked sentinel holding a long spear pacing up and down before it. Now, as we

have already said, between the building of the mysterious city and the wall was a wide open space. Chauncey flew across it like the wind.

He expected the Indians to follow him, but they did not. On the contrary they all halted at the end of the building and stood there shouting and yelling and brandishing their spears. They seemed to be signalling the man at the gate and for some mysterious reason afraid to cross. As for the Indian at the gate, he appeared to be no less afraid, for Chauncey could see him tremble, but he raised his spear threateningly.

"I wonder if I've got to shoot that fellow," thought Chauncey, as he ran on. "I don't want to, but out of this I've got to go."

He unslung his rifle and looked up for the balloon. It had vanished.

"No hope from that quarter," thought Chauncey. "I've just got to depend upon myself and I may as well try a little bluff."

He threw up his rifle and fired at the gate sentinel, aiming over his head. This was showing the Indian more consideration than most persons in Chauncey's situation would have done. It worked well, however. The Indian dropped his spear and fell on his face, spreading his arms out before him on the ground. Chauncey thought that he had certainly killed him, as he ran on.

He now saw that it was nothing of the sort.

The Indian came crawling toward him over the ground on his knees, bowing and waving his hands.

"I've got him," thought Chauncey. "He thinks I'm a god or something. Hello, you! Open the gate!"

It is not to be supposed that the Indian understood these words, but he seemed to grasp their meaning. He sprang up and ran toward the gate. It seemed to be all a mass of solid stone under the big arch, but the Indian knew to the contrary, and, pressing some hidden spring, all the stone under the arch moved to the right in one solid mass, leaving an opening about three feet in width.

The Indian jumped aside and waved his hand toward the opening. Chauncey needed no second invitation. He slid through the gate. Instantly the stones moved back into place. Chauncey was now in the ruined city again and when he turned to look at the wall it was one unbroken line of stone, and it would have puzzled a sharper one than he was to have told just where the break had been.

CHAPTER XIV.—Talking Over the Situation.

"By thunder, that was a close shave!" exclaimed Chauncey, half aloud. "Well, I suppose if Professor Ponti is right there is no danger of the Indians coming in here after us. Hello! Hooray! We are all right now!"

Looking over toward the ruined temple Chauncey, to his great joy, saw the balloon bobbing up and down a few feet above the ground. Professor Ponti had managed to make his landing all right by throwing out ballast and as Chauncey hurried forward Budd came running to meet him, while Professor Ponti and Clara followed at a more leisurely pace.

"Hooray! Chauncey got out all right! I knew he would!" shouted Budd.

"Well, young man, you did manage to make your escape!" exclaimed Professor Ponti. "I felt sure you would work it somehow. As I told you, those old Aztecs are very superstitious. They won't cross the open space behind the wall unless their priest or medicine man or whatever you like to call him gives them permission. Let me introduce my daughter, Clara, Mr. Rippingdale, and let me thank you for the great service you have rendered her. By the way, what is the name of your friend here? I haven't had time to ask him, but we can do all the talking we wish now. The Indians will never come out here into the old city. We are perfectly safe."

They now returned to the old temple, talking as they walked along. It appeared that Professor Ponti was a resident of the City of Mexico, who had come up into the mountains with his daughter, Katzenmeyer and a young Indian named Juan, to seek the mysterious City in the Clouds, rumors of its existence having reached him through various travelers and particularly through Juan, who belonged to the old Aztec race and once lived within its walls. They succeeded in climbing the mountain by the greatest exertion, and, guided by Juan, reached the old city two days before the arrival of the boys. This had been deserted by the Indians long before, owing to some prophesy made by their priest, and they then retired further along the tableland, built the new city and the wall between. From that time on it became contrary to their laws for anybody but the priests to visit the ruined buildings outside the wall, except on a certain night in the year, when everybody formed in solemn procession and marched through its deserted streets.

As luck would have it, this was the very night on which the boys arrived in the balloon and they came down in the storm just after Professor Ponti's party had been attacked by the Indians. Juan was killed in the fight and Clara captured. Professor Ponti and Katzenmeyer escaped; the former contrived to get down over the precipice to the shelf where Chauncey found him, while Katzenmeyer wandered about among the ruins until he met the boys.

It was a most fortunate meeting for Chauncey, for Professor Ponti was a perfect expert in balloons. As soon as he understood the situation and Chauncey had told his story the professor took right hold and showed our hero points about the balloon which he had never dreamed. The mysterious valves and ropes were all explained. A number of curious cylinders stowed away under the seats of the car the professor explained to Chauncey were made of aluminum, painted like mud and contained hydrogen gas highly concentrated.

Moreover he explained that the balloon was in sections and the gas was only out of three of these compartments. By means of a rubber tube, the use of which Chauncey had never guessed, which he now attached on turn to three of the cylinders and to certain stop cocks in the balloon above, Professor Ponti was able to refill the damaged compartments with gas sufficient to make the balloon quite serviceable again.

We could go still further with this explanation and tell how Chauncey and the professor returned to the temple, and, finding it deserted, passed on over the wall, for Professor Ponti was able to control the movements of the balloon to an extent which greatly astonished his companion, but we have dwelt long enough on these explanations and must return to our story at once.

"Well, boys," said Professor Ponti, after they had finished talking over their affairs—and the professor, as well as Clara, spoke perfect English, by the way—"here we are thrown together most strangely up among the clouds and the point to decide is how we are to get down to earth again, for I confess to you that I have searched in vain for the particular point where Juan brought us up the precipice. You see we finished the ascent after dark and I did not think to mark the spot, as I ought to have done."

"Why not go by balloon?" asked Clara. "It seems to me the only way."

"Why, my dear, we have not been invited," replied her father, smiling. "You forget that the balloon does not belong to us."

"It belongs to you just as much as it does to Budd and myself," said Chauncey. "Don't stand on ceremony. We are just as anxious to get away as you are, but I don't propose to leave this place empty-handed, not if I know it, when there is a fortune to be had if one has only got the courage to take it."

Professor Ponti stared at Chauncey as though he thought he had gone crazy.

"A fortune!" he exclaimed. "Why, what in the world do you mean?"

"Look here," said Budd, putting his hand in his pocket and pulling out a handful of the glittering stones taken from the jars found in the old building on top of the pyramid. "He means these."

CHAPTER XV—Tackling the Golden Suns Again

Professor Ponti eagerly took the stones from Budd and examined them with great care.

"Why, they are diamonds of the purest water and have been beautifully cut!" he exclaimed. "It is really wonderful what skill these Aztecs possess. Are there any more where these came from, Budd?"

"Lots!" replied Budd. "Then there are those gold suns, Chauncey; we want them, too."

"Don't think of touching the suns!" exclaimed Clara, who had heard all about her own adventures in the temple of which she remembered nothing. "I wouldn't have any one of you go back to that dreadful place for all the world."

"I don't know about that," replied her father. "I'm inclined to think that I agree with the boys. Those golden suns will be immensely valuable as relics. Juan told me about them, but he didn't know exactly where they were, and so long as our young friends here do know, I for one am entirely opposed to leaving without them. As for the diamonds, they are worth a fortune if we can only get hold of enough of them. If the boys know where there are more, I am decidedly in favor of getting those, too."

"What's the matter with going about it now?" asked Chauncey. "What's the matter with making our start this very night?"

"The sooner the better. While we seem to be safe here for the time being, we can't hope to be so for long. The Indian priests came freely into the old city. They captured Katzenmeyer and Clara here in the temple once and they may try it again, but we can't all go to the pyramid. Some one has to stay and watch the balloon."

"You stay," said Chauncey. "Budd and I will go."

"But the priests? You know what happened each time you tried to pull those suns down."

"I've got an idea," said Chauncey. "I'm not a bit afraid and I think I can work it. Anyhow I'd like to try."

"Take Katzenmeyer with you," said the professor; but Chauncey did not want the odd little German's company, for he felt perfectly sure that he would be of no real assistance to him in case of an emergency, so he and Budd started back for the pyramid alone.

"By gracious, I don't like this, Chaunce," whispered Budd, when they found themselves in the old hall once more. "If it wasn't for you, Chaunce, I wouldn't never have come here, you bet."

"You can go back now if you want to," replied Chauncey, "but I'm going to push right ahead, and don't you forget it, Budd, this time we'll capture the golden suns."

Budd looked doubtful and it must be admitted that his teeth were chattering.

"If it was me I'd go for them diamonds first," he said; and this is exactly what they did.

There was no trouble in gaining the secret passage under the altar. The big golden suns stared down at them, the one which Budd had pulled down lay at the foot of the altar untouched. It seemed hard to understand why the Indian priests who guarded the temple should have allowed it to lie there. It almost looked as though they were afraid to touch the suns. The boys made their way to the chamber under the roof and emptied every one of the jars of the old bones.

Each one contained diamonds; some more, some less. Chauncey was wild with enthusiasm.

"This will make us rich, Budd!" he exclaimed. "No more hard work on the old farm for me."

They gathered the diamonds into a little bag which Chauncey had brought along for the purpose. There were several hundred of them, and some were very large. So far they had not seen a soul nor heard a sound. After they were through they went up on the roof and each in turn climbed upon the parapet and had a look over the great wall into the mysterious city.

They could see the Indians moving about the big buildings, but there appeared to be no special excitement. Looking off on the ruined city they could see the balloon bobbing up and down in front of the temple, Katzenmeyer was standing near it. He caught sight of Chauncey and waved his hat. Professor Ponti and Clara were nowhere to be seen.

"Now for the tug of war, Budd," remarked Chauncey, when both had had their look. "I mean to have those golden suns or bust, and I shall get them, too—you'll see."

They descended the steps and came out under

the altar. The great hall was silent and deserted. Chauncey set his lantern down behind the altar and took out of his pocket a number of small, round objects, which he proceeded to place on the great stone in a row.

"What are those, Chaunce?" asked Budd, curiously. "They look like some kind of fireworks."

"That's just what they are. They are Bengal lights of all colors. I found them in the balloon; they were intended for signals, I expect."

"But what are you going to use them for, Chaunce?"

"To overawe the Indian priests, and I believe they'll do it. Budd, you take this ax and go for the suns. You see each is set into a little round stone projection. It will spoil the ax but I think you ought to be able to knock each one off with a single blow."

"I can knock one off, but whether I will ever get a chance to knock off the second is the question."

"Trust me," replied Chauncey, leaning his gun against the altar and taking out a box of matches. "Now, then, Budd, fire away and don't be frightened at the ringing of that bell."

Budd grasped the ax all in a tremble and struck a furious blow at the little stone projection behind the nearest sun, which fell to the floor with a sharp, rattling sound. At the same instant the clang of the bell rang out through the old temple and from behind every statue an Indian sprang out as before.

"Go on, Budd! Go on!" breathed Chauncey, striking a match and touching it to the first of the row of Bengal lights.

An intense blue flame shot up from the altar, lighting the dark interior as bright as day, Chauncey at the same time uttering a loud shout and waving his arms wildly above his head, keeping his eyes all the while fixed upon the Indian priests as they came rushing across the floor.

CHAPTER XVI.—The Capture of the Golden Suns.

Chauncey Rippingdale was really a very smart boy, for he was not only a close observer, but always had his wits about him, which is more than most of us can say. During the short time that he was in the mysterious city behind the wall, he learned that these Indians were highly superstitious and terribly afraid of white men.

And they had reason to be, for they were the last living descendants of the old Aztecs, who still retained their ancient religion and enjoyed their freedom. They had no desire to hold any communication with the Mexicans of the valley far below them. They were quite content to remain quietly up among the clouds. It was on this discovery that Chauncey had formed his plan.

"If I can arouse their superstition; if I can only make them believe we are gods sent down from Heaven to get the golden suns, we shall be all right," he thought when he ranged the Bengal lights along the top of the altar.

This was his plan. Had it worked? As the Indians came toward him at the sound of the bell just as usual, Chauncey was somewhat doubtful

about it. But his doubts lasted only for a moment. Instantly the lights flared up the Indians halted. Chauncey shouted at the top of his lungs, waving his hands more wildly than ever. Budd kept on pounding away at the suns. As the priests of the old temple stood staring in astonishment at the strange light on their altar, and the stranger figure behind it, the light changed from blue to red, and then yellow, green and purple were mingled with it. The whole interior of the temple was brilliantly illuminated in all the colors of the rainbow, and the grim old statues echoed back Chauncey's wild cries.

It was too much for the priests. They fell on their faces to a man and crouched before the altar.

"Quick, Budd! Quick!" breathed Chauncey. "Now is our chance, if ever! How many of the suns are down?"

"Three," replied Budd, "and here goes a fourth."

He struck at the big golden disk and it fell clanging to the pavement. Then another fell, and another—all were down, and Chauncey yelling like mad all the while.

"Done," said Budd. "Gosh! Have we got to pass through them fellers, Chaunce?"

"That's what!" replied Chauncey. "Here goes for it! Take it easy, Budd. Don't run. Everything depends upon our being cool."

He stepped back from the altar and gathered up four of the golden suns, Budd taking charge of the other three. They were good and heavy—all the boys wanted to carry, in fact. With two under each arm, Chauncey, still yelling, stepped boldly down among the crouching priests and walked with slow and measured tread toward the door. Budd followed him in silence, his face showing how frightened he was. No doubt most, if not all, of the crouching priests saw the boys, but they never raised their heads, and made no attempt to stop them. In a moment Chauncey and Budd had vanished through the door. As soon as they gained the open air they went scrambling down over the stones, reaching the bottom of the pyramid in safety.

"Hurray! We've done it!" cried Budd. "Oh, Chaunce, what a feller you are! Was there ever anything done so slick?"

"Don't holler before we are out of the woods," replied Chauncey. "Run for your life, now, boy!"

Professor Ponti soon saw him coming, and waved his hand encouragingly, while fat little Katzenmeyer came waddling on to meet and help them on with their load.

"My Shimmeney Chreesmas, so you did got dem!" he exclaimed. "Vell, vell! I nefer did dink it. Here, led me haf von, two, dree—de professor, he vill be very joyful about dis."

The professor met them at the bottom, wild with enthusiasm.

"Good for you, boys!" he cried. "I must confess I was dreadfully concerned about you. Bless my heart, those things are worth a thousand dollars a piece; but how about the diamonds? Did you get any more?"

"Our pockets are stuffed full of them!" ex-

claimed Chauncey. "Here, Clara shall have the biggest one. I kept it separate for her."

And Chauncey pulled out a diamond as big as a bantam's egg and placed it in Clara's hands.

"Mercy on us! It's forth a fortune!" cried Clara. "Chauncey, you have had all the risk. You mustn't give me that. You ought to keep it for yourself."

"No," said Chauncey. "It's yours. Now listen, everybody, while I tell you how we did it. There's no denying that we had a narrow escape."

"Well," said the professor, after the story was told, "the question now is, what is to be our next move?"

"Let's light out," said Budd.

"I think we ought to be on the move immediately," added Chauncey.

"It don't vas safe to stay here now," chimed in Katzenmeyer, "but how about all dese heavy t'ings? Eef we put dem in de car it will veigh de balloon down so dat it cannot rise."

"We will soon fix that," returned Professor Ponti. "All other ballast goes out. There will be no trouble."

"And where are we to land?" asked Clara. "I don't like the idea of going up in a balloon very much, I must confess."

"You need have no fears," replied her father. "You know very well I did not. The way the wind is now we shall pass directly over the valley and cross the chain of mountains opposite to this. Beyond that is the great tableland of Northern Mexico, and we shall be no long distance from Guadalajara. The voyage will be an easy one, I assure you all."

This was entirely satisfactory to Chauncey, and with the help of Budd and Katzenmeyer the seven golden suns were loaded into the balloon. The diamonds were all collected together in a bag and stowed away carefully in the car.

Everything was now ready. Clara was assisted into the car, and Katzenmeyer climbed in after her. Budd followed, and Chauncey was just about to climb in, too, when Clara suddenly remembered that she had left her shawl behind her in the room of the old temple from which everything else that they were able to carry had been brought away and carefully stowed in the balloon.

"I'll run back and get it," said Chauncey. "It won't take a moment."

"Don't be long," replied Professor Ponti. "I feel most anxious to be off, for there is no telling what turn affairs may take after what you boys have done."

"I won't be a moment," replied Chauncey, bounding up the steps.

He passed through the open doorway and all watched anxiously for him to come out again, but the moments passed and he did not appear.

"What can have become of him?" cried Clara. "Oh, I wish I had not sent him back!"

"Great Heavens! The boy is lost!" gasped the professor at the same instant, for out through the doorway a crowd of Indians came running. They set up a wild shout, and, raising the long spears which they carried, began throwing them at the balloon.

CHAPTER XVII.—Chauncey Falls Into Trouble Again.

Professor Ponti was a man quick to act. It was necessary to abandon Chauncey or to sacrifice the lives of all in the car.

Professor Ponti thought of his daughter, and decided on the former course. He climbed into the car, leaned down and cut the rope.

"Let me out! Let me out! I won't go back on Chauncey!" yelled poor Budd.

He tried to spring out of the car, but Katzenmeyer, whose arms were provided with muscles of iron, caught him and held him back. The shower of spears did not quite reach the balloon, which now immediately rose above the ruined city.

Poor Budd cried like a baby when he tore himself free from Katzenmeyer's graps all too late, and Clara hid her face in her handkerchief and sobbed.

"Enough of this!" cried Professor Ponti, sternly. "No one can be more sorry for the boy than I am, but in such an emergency as this we must think of ourselves."

Perhaps he was right, but it certainly did seem rather hard to desert poor Chauncey in such a fashion, and we may as well mention right here that Budd never forgave the professor for his action that day. Meanwhile Chauncey was a prisoner in the hands of the Indians. They came upon him suddenly, just as he entered the old temple.

He was seized and while the attack was made on the balloon the four Indians who had charge of him kept him standing in the room. They held him in grim silence, and so tight that it was simply impossible to struggle. Chauncey tried to talk to them, tried to pull away—tried everything, but all in vain. At last they moved with him toward the open door, where their companions joined them, and Chauncey could see the balloon soaring over the living city.

The Indians stood there talking to each other in low tones, until the balloon passed into a cloud and disappeared, after which they dragged Chauncey back into the recesses of the temple, hurried him from room to room, passing at last through a low doorway and down a flight of stone steps which seemed never ending. Chauncey counted a hundred and fifty of them, and did not begin until they had gone down quite a distance. At the bottom they struck into a broad passage lined with stone on all sides. This they followed for a considerable distance, and then there were steps to ascend, after which they came out into a large room, passed out by a doorway, and Chauncey found himself in the streets of the living city once more.

His appearance there caused the greatest excitement. Men, women and children flocked about him, shouting and yelling, throwing stones at him, trying to tear him away from his captors, who had all they could do to beat them off.

"I'm in for it," thought Chauncey. "This comes of fooling with those golden suns. Oh, don't I wish I had left the blessed things alone?"

He looked up for the balloon, but it was nowhere to be seen. Just then a big stone flew past his head and hit one of the Indians who held

him. The man gave an angry yell, prodding them with their spears and driving them back. But the crowd was not to be subdued so easily.

They closed about the guards and knocked several of them down, the stones flying all the while. Chauncey now gave himself up for lost. The men who held him let go their hold and charged on the crowd, prodding them with their spears and driving them back. But after retreating a short distance they came on again. They closed about the guards and knocked several of them down, the stones flying all the while. Chauncey now gave himself up for lost. The men who held him let go their hold and charged on the crowd. Chauncey joined in with them, and fought like a tiger. The noise and confusion was awful, but the boy fought bravely, and beat back the Indians who tried to seize him, until all at once a big stone struck him in the head and knocked him senseless. The last he remembered was pitching forward and being seized by a tall Indian whom he was in the act of striking, and then without any time seemingly having elapsed he came back to himself to find that he was lying stretched out upon a hard stone floor with his head throbbing as though it would burst. It was pitch dark; the place had a damp, moldy smell. Chauncey scrambled to his feet, his heart beating violently. There was something moving near him, some animal, he thought. He could hear its heavy breathing, and there was a grinding of teeth, then a low growl, and then all at once an awful snarling cry, and the horrid thing gave a leap, missed Chauncey, who sprang aside, and landed growling on the stone pavement with a heavy thud.

CHAPTER XVIII.—The Earthquake.

Chauncey's blood fairly ran cold with horror. He ran off into the darkness for a few steps. It was no use—the thing was following him. He could hear it stealing across the floor, so he stopped and listened, trembling from head to foot.

"Strand your ground!" suddenly called a voice out of the darkness, speaking in good English. Don't try to run. I'll have him dead in a minute—then I will strike a light."

"For pity's sake, who are you?" gasped Chauncey, entirely taken aback.

Before there was time for an answer the thing made another spring. Chauncey could not keep back a cry of horror, nor prevent himself from dodging to one side. It was well that he did so, for the animal brushed past him and dropped on the floor behind. Instantly there was a rush in the darkness, a great scrambling, snarling cry, and then a long, low moan.

"Ah-h-! I've done it!" exclaimed the voice. "He's torn my arm, though."

"Is it dead?" called Chauncey.

"Yes—I'm bleeding terribly. I'm getting faint. Say, boy—matches—left-hand pocket—oh—I——"

There was the sound of a fall, and the voice spoke no more. This was Chauncey's time to act, and he went right about it. Groping about on the floor for the first thing his hands touched was the hairy side of some great animal. He pulled away

in a hurry, and moved on his hands coming in contact with a human body next.

It was a man dressed in shirt, vest and trousers, barefooted and bareheaded. All this Chauncey was able to tell by feeling, and his hands became all smeared over with blood before they found the matches in the left-hand vest pocket. He struck one on the pavement and saw as the flame flared up that the stranger was a boy of about his own age, with a dark complexion, evidently an Indian, or a Mestizo, as the Mexican half-breeds are called. At a little distance away lay the dead body of a large jaguar, or mountain lion, with a knife buried in its vitals and to all appearances quite dead.

So much for what Chauncey saw while the light of the match lasted. Most fortunately he was able to secure a better light, for he had a candle in his pocket taken from the stores in the balloon, and it took him less than a minute to light it and set it upright upon the floor in its own wax. He had just accomplished this when the wounded boy opened his eyes and sat upright.

"Hello! Did I go off?" he gasped. "Oh, my arm!"

"Keep quiet," said Chauncey. "I'm going to fix that. We'll talk afterward."

Tearing away the boy's shirt sleeve, Chauncey made a bandage and tied it tight about the gaping wound made by the jaguar's teeth. This soon stopped the bleeding, and he was able to take in his surroundings a bit. He was in a large underground chamber supported by great pillars of stone, which extended off into the darkness as far as he could see on all sides.

"What place is this?" he asked the boy, who now staggered to his feet. "Who are you? How did I come here? You seem to be stronger; perhaps you are able to tell me about it all."

"Indeed I am, and that's just what I'm going to do," was the reply. "One question at a time, though. You are under the big temple, and we were both put here to feed the sacred lion—that thing there—he'll never want a meal again. As for my name, it's Juan something or other—I could never find out the rest of it. I am half an Indian and half a cowboy. My mother was born here among these people. She was captured by a band of Apache Indians and carried to Arizona, where my father married her and I was born, and they both died. I have lived among Indians and I've lived among cowboys. A year ago I wandered to the foot of these mountains and was captured by my mother's brother and a band of three old Axtecs, who once in a while go down into the towns. What do you think of that for a story? Now, then, perhaps you'll tell me your name and how you came to be up here in that balloon?"

Chauncey lost no time in responding, and then Juan gave additional particulars about himself.

"I've been living among these people for a year," he said, "but I didn't like it, and outside of my uncle none of them cared for me. I was always in trouble, and always trying to run away. When I saw you fighting in that crowd I jumped in and took your part. That's what sent me here. We were both taken and dragged down into this hole, and the sacred lion turned loose upon us. I could tell you a whole lot more about myself,

but it's no use now. What we want to do is to get out of this place and I think I know a way."

"But what good would it do us?" asked Chauncey. "We should only be taken again. We can't escape over the wall."

"The wall is not on this side, young feller. My uncle has posted me about this place. You don't know, and I do. Don't think I'm crazy because I rattle on so. It is so good to be able to talk English with somebody that I can't keep my tongue still. Oh, I wish I could take you outside! Couldn't I show you strange things!"

"I've seen enough," replied Chauncey hastily. "If there is any way of escaping from the city altogether, I'm with you, but I might as well die here as be stoned to death by those Indians outside."

"That's true enough," replied Juan, "but they are not such a bad lot if you come to know them. One thing they are dead set on, though, and that is to keep all outsiders from coming into the city, and mighty few have done it, and of the few who have found their way in not one ever escaped down the mountain alive."

"Which leaves us a poor chance," replied Chauncey. "I suppose if we had let those golden suns alone I should have been all right."

"Perhaps. They were afraid of the balloon, but the suns were sacred; you scared the priests who guarded them, for the moment, but they never meant to let you escape; we may get through. Come on. I think I know a way out of this."

Juan picked up the candle and started off among the pillars, closely followed by Chauncey. They had not advanced more than a dozen yards when suddenly a deep rumbling sound was heard, and the ground began to tremble beneath their feet.

"What is that?" gasped Chauncey in dismay.

"Earthquake!" cried Juan. "Run! We must get out of this before the temple comes tumbling down."

They had no more than started when the pavement seemed to rise under them, thunderous sounds echoing through the gloomy chamber.

"We are done for!" gasped Juan, pitching forward.

Chauncey fell with him. The big stone pillars cracked and fell right and left, while great stones from the ceiling came tumbling about their heads.

CHAPTER XIX—Working in the Dark.

As Chauncey lay sprawling on the ground on top of Juan, the half-breed, he thought his last hour had come. Three earthquake shocks followed in quick succession; the crash and roar was tremendous. If the two boys could have been above ground at that moment they would have been witnesses to a strange and awful sight. A dense, black cloud had settled over the doomed city of the Aztecs. The great buildings were falling in every direction. The streets were swarming with the frightened Indians, all moving toward the narrow gateway in the wall as their only means of escape.

Crash followed crash. Hundreds — perhaps

thousands perished that night, but the greater part of the population escaped to the great tableland beyond the city; a large portion of the wall falling gave them ready exit, and away from the buildings they were comparatively safe. The great temple beneath which Chauncey and Juan were imprisoned was thrown down in part, but most of the massive foundation pillars remained intact. Hundreds of stones fell about the boys, still there was no general collapse, and after it was all over Chauncey and Juan found themselves unharmed, prisoners in the darkness and entirely ignorant as to how they should escape.

"You see," said Juan, as they stood together talking over the situation, "my uncle told me of a secret door down here which opens on a flight of steps. These steps lead down the mountain. It is a way so secret that no one but a few of the priests are acquainted with it. I thought I could find this door, but now that everything is changed I don't see how we are going to do it. Besides, we've lost our candle and we might wander around here in the dark all night and never discover the way out."

"All the same, I propose to try," replied Chauncey. "I'm one of the kind that never gives up."

"A regular Yankee," said Juan. "I've seen your kind before. Oh, I wish we were safe out of it all. I was a fool ever to come down into Mexico. I had been warned. I might have known I'd be caught."

"That's just what I don't understand," said Chauncey. "You say you were born in Arizona. How did your uncle know you?"

"Oh, that's easily explained. In the first place, I look exactly like my mother and like himself; in the next place every one of the old race are marked when they are born by a brandon the back of the head, behind the left ear. Here, give me your finger. I'll show you. Feel that little pyramid-shaped scar? Yes? Well, that's it. My mother was fool enough to burn me there when I was a baby. If she hadn't I don't believe I would be here now, but she did it and here I am."

"And here you are likely to stay unless we can find that secret door of yours," replied Chauncey. "That means work. I'm going to work. Tell me, as we stood when the earthquake came, was the door to the right or to the left?"

"It was in the back of the temple away over in the northwest corner. That would be to the right. You see, we are on the very edge of the tableland and part of the rear wall of the temple is the solid ledge which forms the top of a great precipice. You can look down from the room thousands of feet."

"We'll find it," said Chauncey. "Now, keep close to me. I'm going for that northwest wall."

"If we could only find the candle."

"It isn't any use to look. I've felt all over everywhere; it must be under one of the stones."

Keeping close to each other the boys moved off in the darkness. It was dangerous work. Every moment they would stumble over some of the fallen stones or run against one of the big pillars which supported the temple. Once as they came in contact with one it fell—fell away from them luckily—and the stones went crashing down upon the pavement, while great pieces

of the ceiling dropped about their heads and yet, strange to say, they came out of it unharmed.

"It's no use!" groaned Juan. "We will have to give it up. We can never find our way out of here."

"What would you do, then?" demand Chauncey, half angrily, "lie down and starve to death? No, thank you. I'm not that kind. Come on or I shall go and leave you. Hush! Look! By gracious, a light!"

A faint glimmer had suddenly shown itself in the darkness, moving slowly past them a great way off. Suddenly it flashed up brighter and then then moved low down toward the pavement and remained there gleaming like a star.

"There is some one over there, that's what," said Juan. "If we run against any of the priests they'll kill us, sure. Remember, I have been condemned to death and I know them well enough to be sure that they will lay this earthquake to you."

"It don't make any difference," replied Chauncey, firmly. "I'm going straight to that light."

He walked on and Juan followed him. At first the light did not help much, but it soon began to show Chauncey his way among the pillars; in a few moments they were near enough to see that it was a flaring torch thrust down between two great stones, but they could see no one near it, and except for the sound of their own footsteps, all was as silent as the grave.

"Strange what it can mean," thought Chauncey, "but then on the ground?"

The mystery was explained as they drew nearer. There lay an old Indian dressed in the sacred lion skin, everything is strange here. "Hello!" he whispered after a moment, "there's one of your friends, Juan! See him lying there which showed that he was a priest."

He was horribly wounded; his head seemed to have been crushed by some falling stone, yet he had dragged himself to this place for a purpose, for his hand clutched a great stone ring imbedded in the pavement, and there he lay quite dead. Evidently his last dying effort had been to pull up the stone to which the ring was attached. Juan rushed up to him with a shout.

"Why, it's old Abooya, the guardian priest of the temple!" he exclaimed. "A wicked old wretch, Chauncey. He never came here for nothing. There's something under that stone."

"He's dead all right," replied Chauncey, "and we have got our light at last."

"We've got more than that. Wait and see. I tell you there is something under this stone."

Chauncey's curiosity was fully aroused when Juan disengaged the hand of the dead Indian from the ring. Juan was unable to lift the big stone to which the ring was attached alone, but when Chauncey took hold it came up. Beneath was a square compartment about two feet deep in which lay hundreds of gems, diamonds, rubies, emeralds, sapphires and other stones, all glittering in the light of the torch.

CHAPTER XX.—The Flight Down the Steps.

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Juan. "Nothing but a lot of colored stones. Some of the old trash belonging to the priests. Here, Chauncey, let's take the torch and come on."

"Wait!" cried Chauncey. "These are all gems. They are worth a fortune."

"Are they? You don't mean it? How do you know? Are you sure?"

"Sure enough to make me want to carry away all my pockets will hold, and you had better do the same."

Chauncey bent down over the hole and scooped up the gems by the handful, stuffing his pockets with them until he could carry no more, and even after Juan had loaded himself down there were still thousands left in the hole. The boys then moved on toward the wall, which they soon gained.

"The steps which led up into the temple must be near here somewhere," said Juan, "but we don't want them; if I can only find the secret door, that's enough for me."

"How will you know it?" asked Chauncey.

"By a ring in the wall, just like that one we pulled up."

"Shall we try it to the right or the left?"

"I'm sure I don't know. It makes no difference; if we miss it one way we can come back and try it the other."

Juan kept flashing the torch on the wall as they walked along, but they covered the entire distance to the side wall of the temple without seeing anything of the ring. Then they retraced their steps and at last Chauncey sprang forward and laid his hand upon a small stone ring which hung down from the wall.

"This must be it!" he exclaimed, "but everything looks solid enough here."

"It is it!" cried Juan. "I'm sure of it. Pull, Chauncey, pull!"

Chauncey pulled with all his might, but nothing happened. Juan laughed and dropped on his knees.

"See this round, black stone in the pavement?" he exclaimed. "This is the bolt. It is all just as my uncle told me. Look! I can push it down with my finger. Now pull."

Chauncey gave the ring a yank and the great block of stone to which it was attached moved outward as easily as though it had been set on oiled hinges. Behind it was a narrow passage about twenty feet in length and beyond Chauncey, to his intense joy, could see daylight.

"Hooray!" he shouted. "We are safe at last! Now, then, Juan, show me your steps."

Juan climbed into the passage and crawled along on all fours to its end, for it was not high enough to allow him to stand upright.

Chauncey lost no time in following him, and a moment later the boys found themselves standing on the top of a flight of small stone steps out in the solid rock which led down an interminable distance in a deep valley far below them. It made Chauncey's head swim to look down, for it was thousands of feet to the bottom of the steps. They had been most skilfully constructed in the perpendicular side of the towering cliff and must have taken years to cut out. A vast stretch of country lay spread out before the boys. They could see over hundreds of miles and beyond lay the blue waters of the Pacific ocean, gleaming in the light of the descending sun.

Above was the ruined wall of the temple, broken in many places, which gave them some slight hint of the disastrous work of the earth-

quake. They did not stop to look long. Their way out of that strange city in the clouds lay before them and they lost no time in taking it. Chauncey's head fairly reeled as they descended the steps, but Juan, who ran ahead, did not seem to mind it a bit and ran on until he was out of breath, and then, waiting for Chauncey to come up, ran on down again.

There were thousands of the steps; Chauncey tried to count them but got mixed and gave it up. His mind was most disturbed about the fate of Budd. This worried him far more than the thought of what was going to become of himself, and he was still thinking about the balloon and the missing ones when at last they reached the end of the steps and found themselves standing on a broad tableland, which extended off to the westward for many miles.

"Where are we, Juan? Do you know anything about it?" asked Chauncey, as he paused to get his breath.

"I've no more idea than you have," replied the half-breed boy. "Look up! You can't see a thing of the city."

A whizzing sound was heard in the air overhead. Juan looked up and pulled Chauncey aside just in time to avoid a huge stone which came crashing down from above. Whether they had been seen by some of the Indians or whether it was merely an accident the boys did not stop to inquire. The neighborhood of the steps seemed rather an unhealthy place to remain in just about that time, so they took to their heels and ran off into the gathering darkness as fast as their legs could carry them, striking into a thick growth of trees after a few moments, where they slowed down and walked on until it was too dark to see their way.

CHAPTER XXI.—Tracked by the Aztec Priests.

"Stuck again!" exclaimed Chauncey. "Say, Juan, what are we going to do now?"

"Stop here all night, I suppose," replied Juan. "We might have a worse place. All we need do is to lie down under the trees here and go to sleep."

There seemed to be no other course, so Chauncey yielded. They threw themselves upon the ground under a big tree and Juan was soon off into the Land of Nod.

But not Chauncey. Tired as he was he could not sleep, for every bone in his body ached and his mind was so disturbed that try as he would sleep refused to come.

He lay still, however, for fear of disturbing Juan and fully two hours passed before his eyes closed and he dropped off for a moment only to be suddenly awakened by the snapping of a stick near him. Instantly Chauncey raised up and listened. He could hear stealthy footsteps creeping past them through the forest and he touched Juan, who immediately awoke.

"Hush! Listen!" Chauncey whispered.

"I hear! They are after us," breathed Juan. "Wait! We must see what this means."

He crept away on all fours so noiselessly that Chauncey, who did not dare to follow for fear of making their presence known, could not hear a sound.

He waited breathlessly. After a moment all sound died away and then, before he knew it, Juan was at his side.

"Twenty-five!" he whispered. "I don't think they are after us, though. It's the priests. They are after the golden suns."

What makes you think so?"

"Because they are the special guardians of the suns. I heard enough before they captured you. It is their business to look for the suns and they would not be here without some good reason. I think we had better be on the move."

"So do I," replied Chauncey. "Anything is better than staying idly here; but look, Juan, isn't that a light off there among the trees?"

"It certainly looks like it. Seems very faint, though."

"Yes, it is a light. We will go that way."

"And it's the way the priests have gone. There'll be fighting before we are through with this?"

The boys now started on through the forest toward the light, advancing as noiselessly as possible.

In less than five minutes they came suddenly out in to a clearing in the middle of which stood a small hut.

A faint light burned in the window, which faced their way, and there, right before them, between the edge of the forest and the hut, lay the wreck of the balloon!

It almost took Chauncey's breath away. He ran up to it, hardly able to believe his eyes.

The big gas bag had evidently come in contact with the trees and was badly torn.

The car was intact, but empty. Everything belonging to it of any value had been removed.

"They are here!" he exclaimed. "They must be in the hut."

"Your friends are not mine," said Juan. "I must go."

"Go where? What nonsense! Where would you go?"

"Anywhere. These people don't want to see me."

"Ridiculous! Come along. Professor Ponti will be glad to see you, and as for Budd Brown, he will treat you like a brother when he hears what you have done for me."

But Juan's life among the Aztecs seemed to have made him strangely bashful. The boy had much of the Indian character about him, after all. Chauncey ran off toward the hut, Juan slowly following. His sharp eyes were everywhere, for he expected trouble, but he could see nothing of the Indian priests. Chauncey reached the window and peered in. It was as much as he could do to keep back a shout. There, by the side of a dying fire, lay Professor Ponti, wrapped in a heavy serape or Mexican shawl. Clara slept by his side and little Katzenmeyer was curled up in a corner. Budd was nowhere to be seen.

"Juan, here they are!" cried Chauncey, wheeling round.

"Oh, Chaunce!" shouted a boyish figure, which came running up behind him.

It was not Juan, but Budd himself, and never was there a more joyful meeting. Budd caught Chauncey's hand and shook it till his arm was nearly pulled off, talking so fast that it was impossible to get in a word edgewise. Suddenly the

hut door flew open and Professor Ponti came running out, with Clara right behind him.

"Oh, Chauncey, I'm so glad!" Clara cried, while the professor showered questions upon the boy, but Katzenmeyer slept through it all, and, to Chauncey's disgust, Juan had vanished. He could see him nowhere and he did not dare to call him for fear of the Indian priests.

"What is it?" How did you get here? Do speak and tell us about it!" Clara exclaimed.

"My story will keep," replied Chauncey. "Tell me, what happened to the balloon?"

"We tried to descend in this clearing and struck the forest," replied the professor. "The balloon is a hopeless wreck."

"And the golden suns?"

"Are in the hut all right. We'll make a move to-morrow. We can't be far from some settlement. We stopped here with the hope that we might see something of you and it seems that we made no mistake."

"It's the biggest mistake you ever made!" cried Chauncey. "The Indian did not stay by me! I don't know what to tell you to do."

"Indians! How do you know—are you sure of what you are saying?" the professor asked, anxiously.

"Say, Chaunce," broke in Budd, "there's some one over there among those trees. Can that be your friend?"

"Get Clara inside and I'll go and see," replied Chauncey. "Get the rifles ready, professor; there's going to be a fight here, sure."

"Look! Look!" breathed Budd, suddenly seizing Chauncey's arm and pointing toward the edge of the clearing.

There stood three Indians silently looking at them, tall, stalwart fellows, armed with heavy spears.

CHAPTER XXII.—The Stratagem That Did Not Work.

The three Indians stood for a few moments staring at Professor Ponti, and his party and then, turning, vanished among the trees. But Chauncey had no hope that they had gone to stay.

"We must get out of this instantly," he declared. "There are more than twenty of those fellows. They are the Aztec priests I fooled in the temple. They are after the seven golden suns and they mean to get them too."

"Come inside!" We will be safer there," said the professor, most anxiously. "Come inside and we will talk it over, Katzenmeyer! Wake up, you lazy fellow! Wake up! There is work to do here."

It was clear that Professor Ponti, however great a scientist he might be, was anything but a practical man.

"Budd, we have got to run this business ourselves," whispered Chauncey. "You stay here and watch this side. I'll shin over to the edge of the woods on the other. I must know if we are surrounded or not."

"All right, Chaunce. I'll do just as you say."

"Bully for you, Budd. I do like a fellow who don't stop to argue with me. Get me my rifle. There will only be more time wasted in talk if I go inside."

Professor Ponti and Katzenmeyer were hold-

ing a great argument about the suns when Budd ran in for the gun. The little German wanted to throw them out of the window so that the Indian priests might get them in case they surrounded the hut, but the professor was anxious to hold on to them at any risk.

"Come in, Chauncey. Oh, do come in!" called Clara, anxiously.

"Back in a moment!" cried Chauncey, seizing the gun from Budd.

"Here! hold on!" shouted the professor, "don't go away and leave us!"

But Chauncey was already off. Something seemed to impel him to take this step—something which he could not explain. Behind the hut the grass grew high, and, crouching down with his rifle ready, Chauncey ran on till he came to the edge of the clearing. Here he paused and listened. All was profoundly silent and he stepped forward among the trees prepared to have the Indians jump out upon him and prepared to shoot if they did. Nothing of the sort happened. Chauncey looked back toward the hut; all was silent there. He ran on among the trees, crashing around and making all the poise he could. Then suddenly he halted again and stood waiting to meet his fate. It was downright bravery. There was no denying it. Chauncey was looking for a means of retreat and he found it, for nothing happened. The forest was as still as death.

"We can get out this way," thought Chauncey, and he flew back to the hut as fast as possible, keeping low in the grass, so as to avoid all chance of being seen.

After a few moments of planning they decided to take the seven golden suns and the diamonds and leave.

"By schimminy Chreesmas, vat you going to do wit' me?" demanded the little German, swept off his feet by this prompt action.

How could Chauncey tell? He only knew that they could not remain in the hut with any safety to themselves and he was prepared to do the next best thing. He stood Katzenmeyer up in the middle of the floor, and, taking the golden suns, tied them all over him. One was hung about his neck, against his breast, another against his back, one on his right side and one on his left and so on until they were all placed.

Chauncey took a light cloak belonging to Clara and flung it over him.

"Climb out the back window," he said. "Professor, you and Clara go that way. Make for the forest at the edge of the clearing. Budd and I will join you as soon as it is safe."

The professor paused only to gather up a few necessities and then obeyed. Meanwhile Chauncey joined Budd in front of the hut. They paced up and down, keeping an eye on the forest, but no Indians showed themselves.

"They must be safe there by this time, Budd," remarked Chauncey at last. "We may as well make our start. No doubt, they have been watching us, but I haven't the least idea that they suspect the others have left."

They turned to enter the hut, when, to their utter astonishment, there stood a tall figure in the doorway. It was an Indian armed with a long spear; two others were behind him, a dozen more seemed to rise right up out of the ground. With a fiendish yell they flung up their spears and made a rush for the two boys.

CHAPTER XXIII.—In Close Quarters.

Although completely taken aback, Chauncey never lost his head.

"Fire!" he shouted to Budd, and up went the rifles.

The spears flew, but the boys dodged. The rifles got in their work as they beat a retreat. Four shots were fired and four Indians dropped, while the boys bounded away behind the hut, dropped into the high grass and skurried off toward the forest. For a moment the Indians held back astonished at the disaster which had overtaken them. But it was only for a moment, and then they closed in and gave chase, yelling like so many demons, their cries being answered from the forest on both sides. Looking back Chauncey could see that their number was rapidly increasing. On the right and left of the clearing they seemed to come out from behind every tree.

"Great Scott, there's a hundred of them!" gasped Budd. "Oh, Chaunce! We hain't got no show against all this crowd!"

"Hold your horses!" said Chauncey. "When they spear us that ends it, but I don't give up so long as there is a living show."

Apparently the Indians did not see them, for they were rushing at random.

The boys gained the cover of the forest in safety.

Professor Ponti came hurrying forward to meet them.

"Well, well! We did not vacate a moment too soon, young man! he exclaimed. "Heavens, what a mob! What are we to do now?"

"Push on!" panted Chauncey, all out of breath with his exertions.

He threw himself in front of the little procession and they hurried on through the forest, Budd bringing up the rear.

"Where are we going?" asked Clara.

"I know no more than you," replied Chauncey. "It's all quiet behind us, though. I think we have certainly acted for the best."

"Not a doubt of it," said the professor. You are certainly a shrewd fellow, Chauncey. Oh, don't I wish we had the old balloon now!"

"They are coming!" called Budd, in a whisper. "I can hear footsteps."

"Then we are lost!" gasped Professor Ponti, "for we can go no further here."

They had suddenly come upon what seemed to be an insurmountable barrier, for here a deep barranca, or gulch, opened at their feet. It was twenty feet across and extended in both directions as far as they could see in the dim starlight. Chauncey's heart sank, for at that moment a fiendish yell went up behind them.

"By Schiminy Chreesmas, dey know we are stuck!" cried Katzenmeyer. "It's all up mit us now!"

"Don't you worry," said Chauncey, coolly.

"Take it on the left, professor; we'll hurry on. The woods seem to be thicker on that side!"

"No! Take it on the right, for that's the way to escape!" said a voice right alongside of them, and Juan suddenly stepped out from behind a big tree.

"Hooray!" cried Chauncey. "I knew you

wouldn't desert me. This is Juan, professor, the boy I was telling you about. Oh, Juan, where have you been?"

"Working," said Juan. "I knew you could not stay in the hut, so I started out to look up a way of retreat. Follow me! There is a bridge across the barranca right here."

This was joyful news, but it was not all that Juan had to tell.

"On the other side of the bridge runs the camino real, or main road, to the city of Mazatlan," he added, as they hurried on, "and I know the Aztecs well enough to feel sure that they will never venture upon it. They have no desire to be seen by the Mexicans. Once across the bridge we are safe."

This sounded well, but could they get there? That was the question. The Indians were coming rapidly up behind them; their shrill cries could be heard echoing through the forest. Chauncey and Juan hurried on ahead and were soon at the bridge. It was one of those crazy affairs so common in Mexico, made of twisted vines hung to trees on either side of the bank and swinging with the wind.

"Can we ever get Clara across these?" gasped Chauncey.

"Try the little man first; if it bears him it ought to bear anybody. I've been over twice myself," said Juan.

"It can be done and it must be done," added Professor Ponti, coming up. "We'll cut the bridge away behind us. We are almost out of our difficulties now."

"And don't you fear for me," added Clara. "I am equal to anything to-night."

A loud yell broke from the forest behind them at the same instant and a shower of spears came whizzing among the trees.

"Quick!" cried Chauncey.

"Hold on! We are headed off!" echoed Juan, as two Indians suddenly rose up on the other side of the bridge and shook their spears threateningly, uttering fiendish yells. Chauncey made a rush upon the bridge, firing as he went. One Indian threw up his hands and dropped, the other let his spear fly and took Chauncey in the shoulder, but he got in another shot for all that and the Aztec ran off into the darkness.

"Now, now!" shouted Chauncey. "Good for you, Budd! Let 'em have it again!"

Budd was firing back into the forest, and this alone kept the Indians in check. Juan was on the other side already and shouting that the coast was clear.

Professor Ponti supported Clara and hurried her across the bridge, while Katzenmeyer toddled after them, the spears and arrows flying all around, but not one hitting the mark.

"Safe!" shouted the professor. "Come on, boys!"

"Now, then, Budd," called Chauncey.

"After you," said Budd. "I'll do the cutting away."

But Chauncey would not hear to it. He peremptorily ordered Budd across the bridge and, as usual, was obeyed. It was Chauncey's turn at last, but could he avail himself of it? A terrible faintness had suddenly seized him, for the blood was pouring out of his wound. He staggered

forward, stumbled and fell, the force of his fall breaking the frail structure beneath him. Down he went into the barranca, Clara uttering a piercing cry as he fell.

CHAPTER XXIV.—Conclusion.

With Clara's scream ringing in his ears, poor Chauncey went whirling down into the darkness, only to land on a bed of soft, loamy soil not twenty feet below.

"I'm a-coming, Chauncey!" somebody yelled, and down came Budd, landing almost on top of him.

"Don't desert us," Professor Ponti shouted, and then there was another thud and Juan landed beside Budd, who already had Chauncey in his arms. "Is he dead? Is he dead?" cried Juan.

"No, no!" answered Chauncey, pulling himself away from Budd and staggering to his feet. "I'm all right. We must not desert them so. Juan, you ought not to have come down."

"Follow me. We'll soon be up again," replied Juan. "I was down here before you came. There is no trouble about if we only don't run into the Aztecs."

"Are you all alive down there, boys?" shouted the professor, leaning over the edge of the barranca.

"Yes. It's all right," called Juan. "Hurry to the road. It's only a few yards ahead."

"And what about you?"

"We'll join you. Turn to the left and go slowly. You haven't an instant to lose."

This was true enough for just then the Aztecs came rushing up to the broken bridge and arrows were showered upon the professor, who dodged back among the trees. But the situation of the boys was far more critical.

The Indians seemed to have eyes like cats. They instantly spied them and came tumbling down into the barranca.

"We can never escape!" gasped Chauncey. "Leave me, boys. I have to go slow. Save yourselves while you can."

"Not on your life!" cried Budd, turning and firing back at the Indians, while Juan hurried Chauncey forward.

Budd's first shot brought down its man and the second was equally effective, but the Indians came dashing on.

"We are lost!" said Juan; "they are too many for us. Hark! Mules? Hear the bells! Somebody on the road!"

"Help! Save them! Our friends are in the barranca!" Professor Ponti was heard shouting in Spanish at the same time.

It was the last Chauncey heard, for at that moment the deathly faintness which had been increasing every instant overcame him and he sank down at Juan's feet.

Budd was blazing away bravely, when all at once there was a rush on top of the barranca on the side toward the road and twenty or more men, wearing big Mexican hats and armed with rifles, came into view and began firing at the Indians, turning their rifles against both those in the barranca and those on the other bank. This settled the whole matter in short order. The

Aztecs beat a hasty retreat, leaving their dead and wounded behind them. Those in the barranca fled back up the gulch and disappeared in the darkness.

"Is the boy dead?" called a voice in good English. "My name is Brown. I'm the superintendent of the Los Altos mine. We are on our way to Mazatian with a load of ore. Yes, sir, we can get them up by ropes if there is no other way. Don't worry, miss, your troubles are all over now."

These last cheering words were addressed to Professor Ponti and Clara and they proved to be quite true. The place where Juan expected to climb out of the barranca being somewhat further down, ropes were lowered and Chauncey, who had revived by this time, was hoisted up, Budd and Juan following later.

They found that here the camina real ran close alongside the barranca. Here was a train of forty odd mules all loaded down with great rocks of silver ore from the mine, with some sixty men in charge. Of course this happy encounter ended all trouble. Mules were provided for all the party and on the morning of the third day they found themselves safely housed in the Hotel Juarros at Mazatian. Chauncey's wound proved nothing serious and by the time they reached the city he was well on the road to recovery. The greatest curiosity was expressed by all the party to hear the story of the explorers, and it had to be told, although Professor Ponti would have concealed the golden suns if such a thing had been possible.

Chauncey was heartily glad when the Pacific Mail steamer Panama came along and they were able to escape, for he was most anxious to keep all knowledge of the diamonds from the curiosity seekers, and this they managed to do.

After a good many changes of mind, Professor Ponti concluded to accompany the boys to San Francisco instead of returning to the City of Mexico, so they all embarked on the Panama, Juan with the rest, and after a pleasant voyage passed safely through the Golden Gate. Chauncey's first act was to accompany Professor Ponti to a noted dealer in curiosities, who readily purchased the golden suns. They weighed 508 ounces and the price paid for them was \$20,000, being more than twice their value in gold. Chauncey understood later that they were ultimately sold to the British Museum in London for \$25,000; at all events they are there now.

The diamonds and gems brought a far greater sum—we are almost afraid to tell it. They were finally sold to a noted diamond dealer for \$240,000.

This money was equally divided among all the party, Juan included, this being the unanimous desire. Chauncey and Budd alone divided the amount received for the golden suns. And this ended the strange adventures of Chauncey Rippingdale and Budd Brown, which began the night the balloon came down on the farm. Concerning the balloon, Chauncey afterward learned that it was the property of a Professor Tonney, who made an ascent at Austin, Texas, and fell from the car and was instantly killed as the balloon was coming up. Chauncey looked up the widow of the unfortunate man later and presented her with \$5,000, all hands contributing to make up the sum. Before leaving San Francisco for New

York, which they did in a few months, all but Juan, who went down into Arizona and bought a cattle ranch Chauncey and Clara were married.

Next week's issue will contain "SANDY AND SLIM; or, THE BOY DETECTIVES of CALIPHAT."

ONCE LONDON SHOW QUEEN, IS NOW PITIFUL MATCH SELLER

The grotesque, pitiful figure of an old London street-corner match seller swathed in layer on layer of dilapidated clothing against the cold November blasts, revealed herself to The World correspondent recently as Miss Kathleen Lucile Foote, once famous actress.

She is the daughter of a Civil War Colonel.

For five years she has been keeping alive by selling matches in the heart of British theatre-land where once she reigned as queen.

For three years she played leads opposite Wilson Barrett, noted English actor, in London and the provinces. She toured Australia with George Edwardes's Gaiety Company and starred with Henry E. Dixey in New York at Koster & Bial's old Fourteenth Street Theatre in "Gayest Manhattan."

During her colorful career she was married three times. Her first husband was Capt. Perry, an Australian whom she met while playing in Sydney. Then she married S. E. O. Newton of Hull, nephew of a former Lord Mayor of London and son of a Hull shipowner. She met him while acting at Hull. He killed himself in a New York hotel during the run of "Gayest Manhattan."

Shortly afterward the actress married Isidor Isabeau Maas, a prosperous London business man. He died about seven years ago, leaving \$35,000. This and the proceeds from the sale of her jewels lasted her only two years and she drifted rapidly down through the social debris of London to selling matches on a windswept, foggy corner.

RADIO WAVE CHANGES AFFECT 70 STATIONS

A sweeping order changing the broadcasting operations of 70 stations was made public recently by the Federal Radio Commission. Effective Dec. 1, it is designed to clear twenty-five channels between 600 and 1,000 kilocycles.

Among the new allocations ordered were these:

WCAE, Pittsburgh, 650 kilocycles, 500 watts.

WOO and WIP, Philadelphia, 860 kilocycles, 500 watts, sharing with WGBS, New York City.

WNJ, Newark, 1120 kilocycles, 250 watts, sharing with WGCP and WAAM.

WBKN, New York City, 1500 kilocycles, 100 watts, sharing with WURL, Woodside, L. I., and WBMS and WIBI, New York City.

WABC, New York City, 970 kilocycles, 2,500 watts night, 5,000 watts daytime, sharing with WOBQ.

WPCH, Jersey City, and WRNY, New York, sharing 920 kilocycles, 500 watts.

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DEADSHOT DICK, THE BOY RIFLE KING

—OR—

A TENDERFOOT AMONG THE COWBOYS

By R. T. Bennett

CHAPTER XXI.

Shooting the Horses.

On the following morning Bill came riding up to the house, and as he dismounted Dick stepped out to meet him with a cheery "Hello, there, Bill! What's the news?"

"Glorious!" cried the smiling cowboy. "I tell yer, Dick, thet 'are ledge are chockful of gold. Tom Higgins an' his darter has staked their claims next ter ourn, an' I reckon if any galoots come along now thar won't be nuthin' left fer 'em ter claim."

"Have you examined our claim any closer?"

"Bet yer boots I did, an', by jingo, I can't see nuthin' but a big fortune ahead fer each of us. I sot ther boys ter diggin', an' they ain't been turnin' out nuthin' but ther richest kind of pay dirt."

"Good! Good! And what's the next move on our part?"

"Dick, yer as green as grass," grinned the cowboy. "What we want now is ter form a stock company, same as ther fellers over in Golden Nugget, git big capital, put in a crusher an' a smelter, an' sich other machinery as we may need, an' work our claims on a big scale."

"Great Scott! I don't know anything about such things."

"Waal, seein' as yer never had no experience at sich things, I don't wonder at it. However, we kin talk this matter over later on, 'cause here comes Higgins an' his gal in their wagon."

The vehicle soon reached the house, and the storekeeper and his pretty daughter alighted, beaming with joy.

"Hello, Dick!" shouted the old man. "Say, I want to tell you how glad I am that you let me in on this deal. Bess and I are goin' ter git rich off of them claims, an' no mistake."

"I'm glad to hear that, I'm sure, Mr. Higgins," replied the boy, smilingly. "Going to the camp to file your claims now?"

"You bet."

"Very well. Bill and I will ride over with you, as we have some business in Golden Nugget."

He then got his mustang saddled and bridled, and a few moments afterward they all set out over the ranch for Golden Nugget.

As they rode along Dick told Bill about his adventure with Peter Penny and showed him the rascally lawyer's written confession.

"Great rattlers!" gasped the cowboy in astonishment, when he had read the confession. "That galoot got caught in a nice trap. He

should have been tarred an' feathered. He got off mighty easy."

"Well," said Dick, "now that I am rid of him, it will give me a chance to put my affairs in the hands of a decent man, and I am going to see if Tom Higgins won't act for me as a guardian."

They reined in until the wagon reached them, and Higgins cried:

"Do yer want ter speak ter me, Dick?"

"Yes. How would you like to do me a favor?"

"Why, bless yer heart, I'll do anything yer ask me."

"Then listen to my story."

And Dick told Higgins his whole history, showed him Penny's confession and wound up by saying:

"I am not yet of age, and it is necessary for me to have a legal guardian. I want you to act in Penny's place. Will you do it?"

"Of course I will," was the hearty answer.

"An', as it happens, I once acted in that capacity, so yer see I know what's expected of me."

"I am obliged to you, Mr. Higgins."

They now passed some of the cowboys, and after exchanging a few words with them, they rode on to the mining camp.

Here Mr. Higgins and his daughter filed their claims, and the storekeeper led the boy to a little office on the main street, where he introduced him to a respectable old lawyer, to whom the boy told his story. The man of law gladly undertook to attend to the legal work of having Penny discharged as Dick's guardian and having Higgins substituted in his place.

This attended to, the two returned to the store, where they found Bill conversing with Stella Bright Eyes, the Indian girl, whom he had met making a purchase at the store.

While they talked they saw a rickety old stagecoach come down the main street at a furious gallop, with the reins flying loose.

The driver was not upon his seat, and the shrieks of a woman came from within the vehicle, and the voices of men were heard.

"A runaway!" exclaimed Dick.

"Gee! An' ther driver is gone," added Bill.

The team of horses were evidently very badly frightened, and Dick saw that it would be folly to attempt to stop them.

"If they keep on racing from one side of the road to the other, as they are now doing," remarked Bess, "they will wreck the stage and scatter those three passengers from Santa Anna upon the roadway."

"I guess I can prevent that!" exclaimed Dick in grim tones.

As he spoke he flung his rifle up to his shoulder.

Crack! Crack!

It was Deadshot Dick's rifle that was speaking now, and with each rapid shot a coach horse went down—dead!

That, of course, brought the vehicle to a sudden pause.

Over to the coach ran Dick, and, pulling open the door, he said to the woman:

"Calm yourself, madam; the danger is over."

Dick took her hand, and in a moment more she stood in the middle of the road; and the two men scrambled out after her.

One of the men, who had a white beard, shook hands warmly with Dick, and said to him in a grateful way:

"Young man, we owe you our lives."

"Any one hurt?" asked the boy.

"A gang of masked horsemen attacked us just on the outskirts of this town and tried to rob us," explained the old gentleman. "The driver fired at them, and they paid him off by dropping him."

"And that caused the horses to run away?"

"Certainly it did. I tell you, that shooting of yours was really wonderful. Our very lives depended upon our aim, boy."

"I seldom miss a shot, sir."

"What is your name?"

"Dick Dunn."

"By Jove, that's queer! You are the very fellow we came out here to see. But this is a queer way of finding you."

"You were looking for me?"

"Yes. I am John Norwood, and this lady is my wife. The gentleman with us is a very warm friend of ours, Mr. Reed."

Dick acknowledged the introduction politely.

"May I ask what you want of me?" he asked.

"Why, we heard that you had filed a claim, the product of which tells that you have a very valuable piece of mining property, and I want to talk to you about buying it."

CHAPTER XXII.

The New Mining Camp.

It puzzled Dick to know how John Norwood had learned in a distant town that he had staked a claim of great value.

"How did you find out about it, sir?" he asked.

"Quite easily," laughed the speculator. "I have an agent in Golden Nugget who heard of it at the land office, and he saw a sample of your ore assayed, and telegraphed me to come here and see you."

"And you came with the intention of examining the claim, and of making an offer for it if it suits you?"

"Exactly. And now the question is, are you willing to sell?"

"I am if I can get my price for the claim."

"Very good. You get your appraiser and I will go out to the mine and look it over. I think we shall come to terms."

Dick then went back to Higgins' store with Bill, and Bess asked him:

"Who were those people?"

He told her, and then added:

"If I can sell my claim for a good price I shall get rid of it, for I don't take any interest in mining. I wish to devote all my time to the ranch. I mean to develop it and make it one of the biggest and best in the whole State."

"Good for you, Dick!" exclaimed Bess, gleefully. "I thought that you would get rich and leave this place and I might never see you again."

Suddenly Dick asked:

"Are you really so much interested in me, Bess?"

"More so than I ever was in anybody," was her artless reply.

"I mean do you care for me?"

Bess nodded and moved closer to him.

"Dick," said she, "I like you better than any one in this world."

"Then you will be my sweetheart?"

"If you will have me."

"Have you? Why, I fell in love with you the first time I ever laid eyes on you, girlie. And I'll show you now that I mean business."

And he suddenly flung his arms around her slender waist, drew her closer to him and imprinted a rousing kiss on her red lips.

Then, as Bess' father smiled and Bill snickered, Dick and Bess parted.

After talking to Higgins a while about the transfer of guardianship Dick and Bill rode back to the ranch-house and waited there for a man whom Higgins volunteered to send to appraise the boy's claim.

This man was an expert at such work, and as Bill knew him to be a competent person, Dick meant to be guided by his opinion.

His name was Winant Cooper.

He made his appearance in the afternoon on a mustang and proved to be a pleasant, middle-aged man with a brown beard.

"I have had a wide experience at appraising claims," he explained, as they started off for the mine, "and you will be quite safe to take my estimate of its value."

They finally reached the mine and found the cowboys working at Dick's claim, and the leader ran to meet them, crying:

"Say, Dick, you've got a big thing of it here."

"Why, has the lead been panning out good?"

"Come here and I'll show you."

He led the way to an ore heap which came from the hole they were then digging, and the boy, inexperienced as he was, saw that it was filled with gold, which ran in streaks through the quartz.

Cooper said nothing, but made a careful examination, and selecting a few samples, he put them in his pocket for assay.

Half an hour later John Norwood and his friend Daniel Rood rode up and started to look over the ground with the air of people who were accustomed to such work.

When they finished their inspection the speculator said to Dick:

"You have got a big fortune here, my boy."

Just then Cooper joined them and remarked:

"The four claims already staked here about cover all there is available of the lead. I was looking, with a view to staking a claim myself, but I have failed to see any pay dirt in sight."

"Then the first four people to stake claims here are the only ones who will get anything out of it," said Mr. Norwood dryly.

"I am sure of that."

"I'll render my appraisal tomorrow," said Cooper.

"Then you will hear from me tomorrow, Mr. Norwood," said Dick.

That settled the matter for the present, and the two city men rode away, discussing the boy's lucky strike.

(To be continued.)

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NEW YORK, DECEMBER 7, 1927

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INTERESTING ARTICLES

BOSTON MENU REPRESENTS 80,960 LUNCHEON MILES

Statisticians of the Boston Chamber of Commerce estimated that 80,960 "luncheon miles" were involved in laying before its members recently a "transportation day" meal consisting of fruit cocktail, relishes, Philadelphia pepper pot, chicken a la king, ice cream, cake, coffee and rolls.

The product of nine foreign countries and eleven or more states were used. Pepper from Sumatra, 12,000 miles away, held the distance record, while New England tripe was carried the fewest miles.

OLIVER TWIST SHRINE TO GO UNDER HAMMER

Dickens enthusiasts are now to have an opportunity to purchase Pyrford House, the old Georgian mansion, which was identified by Percy Fitzgerald as the house which the unwilling little Oliver Twist entered under threats from Bill Sikes. The very scullery window, through which Oliver was boosted, still exists.

Pyrford house is now offered for private sale and various Dickens societies are endeavoring to find some wealthy patron who will enable them to acquire it.

WHALE TOWS FISHERMEN FOR 4 DAYS AND 3 NIGHTS

A tale of a whale which towed two fishing boats about the Arabian Sea for four days and three nights was told in *The Daily Express* recently.

A dispatch to the paper from Karachi, India, said that a thirty-foot whale became entangled in the nets of two fishing boats. After the boats had been towed helplessly about the Indian Ocean for four days and three nights, their signals for distress were seen. Other boats came to the rescue of the fishermen and eighty men after a twenty-four hour struggle succeeded in landing the whale on the beach.

MYSTERY FIRE DESTROYS FAMOUS FARMHOUSE

The ramshamble Phillips farmhouse, on De Russey's lane, background of the celebrated Hall-Mills case, was reduced to a mound of ashes recently. Fire of unknown origin, raging in a brisk wind, recently engulfed the property that had acquired a criminological fame before firemen could get it under control.

The bodies of the Rev. Edward W. Hall and Mrs. Eleanor Mills were found 300 feet from the dilapidated farmhouse five years ago, and the case kept the place constantly pictured before the public until last year, when Mrs. Hall and her two brothers, Henry and "Willie" Stevens, were finally acquitted of connection with the crime.

The farmhouse, originally owned by the De-Russey family, after whom the now historic De-Russey's lane was named, has been untenanted for several years, but previous to September, 1922, gathered local fame as a lover's trysting place. Since its fame became world wide thousands of curious and others attracted by its history have visited the scene and trips to the deserted place and its "crabapple tree" were still a popular attraction for visitors here last summer.

CITIES SEEK TO END GOITER BY IODINE

Preventive medicine, in carrying on its attack on goiter, has found that entire communities can be dosed through the public supply of drinking water. After the theory had been demonstrated by experiment that endemic goiter is traceable largely, if not entirely, to want of iodine in the human system, public health officials began seeking a means of supplying it. An early measure was the introduction of iodized table salt. Later, an investigation showed that in a given community the occurrence of endemic goiter was in inverse ratio to the amount of iodine in the supply of drinking water, and so the idea of artificial iodine treatment for the city reservoir was conceived.

The city of Rochester was the pioneer in the iodization of drinking water. At present, it is estimated from analysis, every person there take some three gilligrams of iodine every year. Twice a year 16.6 pounds of sodium iodine are dissolved in the water. For a week in May the salt is added every day, then every other day until twenty-one applications have been made, and in October and November the procedure is repeated. As a result, health authorities in Rochester note a reduction in the incidence of goiter there. Elsewhere, both in this country and in England, iodization of drinking water has also been undertaken, though in some communities it has had to be given up on account of the objections raised against it.

Most of the objections commonly raised, according to health authorities, are untenable. The iodine content at present considered desirable is so small that the taste cannot be detected; nor is it thought to be sufficient under any circumstances to exert detrimental effects. Though cost estimates vary widely, the expense is said to be reasonable in view of the possibility of favorable results. The cost in Rochester, for instance, is put at 1 cent a person a year.

Old Graham's Gold

On the right bank of the Hudson, a few miles above the city of New York, surrounded by stately trees and what had once been a beautiful park, stands a large, roomy old stone mansion.

The present owner of Graham Grange was an old man of some sixty or seventy years of age. He was regarded by his neighbors, as well as all who came in contact with him, as eccentric and miserly. Gerald Graham inherited Graham Grange ten years before the opening of our story from an uncle who had lived to a very ripe old age. The uncle was a very rich and also a very charitable man. When he died everybody for miles around the range felt that he or she had lost a very dead friend.

After the funeral it was found that no will had been made, or if made, it was lost. Gerald Graham up in the interior of the State, was the nearest of kin, being the only child of his only brother, and he became master of the estate.

A few days after Gerald Graham took possession of the estate he made a peremptory demand for every penny due, and would listen to no excuse.

In vain did their wives appeal to Mrs. Graham.

She could do nothing with him.

She was a widow with one daughter when she married Gerald Graham. The daughter was about ten years old at the time, and he had a son two years older.

She frankly told them that her husband was a hard man, and that the lot of the poorest one among them was a happy one compared to hers.

Time wore on, and the more people saw of Gerald Graham the less they liked him. They would have nothing to do with him, and when his hard-worked wife died there were no friends of the family to follow her to the grave.

Years rolled on, and Clarissa Clark, the step-daughter, grew into a beautiful womanhood. She did all the housework, for her stepfather would keep no servant. Of course he paid her no wages, and allowed her but two dresses and two pairs of shoes a year.

His son George had grown to manhood—a strapping young fellow, with quite a naptitude for business; but, though very rich, his miserly father would not give him a dollar with which to do business, but insisted on his paying for his board and lodging as long as he remained at home.

By and by the firm for which George was working at a small salary failed, and he was thrown out of employment. He tried in vain to secure another at any rate of pay he could get. Business was dull, and the market overstocked with men and women seeking work.

When he paid for his week's board one day he said to his father:

"This is my last dollar. I shall not be able to pay you anything next week unless I can find a situation."

"In that case I shall not be able to board you, young man," was the reply.

"Father," said George, when he could command his voice, "I have paid you in advance for one

week. Give me back the money and I will go away now. I'd rather be turned out of doors now with a few dollars in my pocket than at the end of the week without a penny."

The result was a quarrel, in which the old man had the advantage in being master of the situation. At the end of the week George, having been unable to find work of any description, Clarissa went to the old man and said:

"Father, George has not been able to find work. You surely will not turn him out of the house because he is not able to pay his board?"

"Why should I take care of one who is able to work?" he replied, testily. "He is as well able to work as I am."

"So he is. All he wants is the work to do. He is your son, and——"

"Oh, never mind that, girl. When a man is old enough to take care of himself he should be made to do so. He——"

"Father, you ought to be ashamed of yourself!" Clarissa cried, her eyes flashing indignantly.

"Silence, girl! Go on about your work, and let me alone. I won't have a big, strapping fellow living on me that way. Let him take care of himself. He is able to work."

"When George goes I'll go, too, father!" snapped Clarissa, turning to leave the room.

"Eh! What's that you say? You go, too, you ungrateful hussy!"

"Ungrateful!" she retorted. "Me ungrateful! Why, I've worked for you six years without a dollar in the way of wages."

"Wages! You had your board and clothes! What more do you want?"

"Ten dollars a year pays for all the clothes you give me," she retorted. "I can get a place at seven dollars a month at Doctor Huntington's, and I am going to go there if George goes away."

While he was thinking of what he should say Clarissa left the room and went to meet George.

"I have heard all that took place between you," said George. "You must not leave here, Clarissa. Stay with him till I come back again, or I shall never be able to hear from him or know how things are. Times won't always be hard with me as they are now. Come what will, dear, I'll never forget you and your kindness to me."

That evening Clarissa prepared supper as usual, looking pale and tearful. Now that George was gone the old house would be simply unbearable. She had not a single companion among the girls of the village, for the reason that not one of them dared to come to the house. The old man looked up at her and said:

"You spoke of going away because George has gone, Clarissa. If you do that not one penny of my money will you ever call your own. Do you understand that?"

"That does not move me in the least, father," she replied.

"Money is a good thing to have," he said, shaking his head.

"It is of no account, save to buy with," she replied. "If one does not use it, of what account is it? I have but two poor dresses. What good would a million dollars do me if I did not buy dresses and such things as I need? Listen to me, father. You have done a thing this day that heaven will punish you for. You have turned your own flesh and blood out into the world without a dollar. George is as good a son as a

father was ever blessed with. But his father loved a dollar more than he loved his son. Be assured that no good will come to you. You will want George some day, and repent of what you have done."

With that Clarissa turned and left the room, leaving the old miser to ponder on what she had said.

A week later was rent day and the old miser went among his tenants and collected several hundred dollars, which he carried home with him and placed in his strong-box under the table in his bedroom, intending to take it to the bank in the morning.

About midnight Clarissa heard a groan, followed by a hoarse cry, coming from old Graham's room.

She sprang out of bed, threw on a wrapper, and hastened to see what the matter was.

Just as she reached the door of the old man's room she felt herself caught roughly by the arm, and a gruff voice say:

"Keep quiet, girl, an' yer'll get no hurt!"

She looked around, and by the dim light of a candle saw a masked man at her side with a revolver in his right hand.

Clarissa then sank down, woman-like, in a dead faint.

"That's all right," growled the burglar, turning away. "She is off my hands now, and I'll attend to you, old man."

It was then the burglar espied the strong-box under the table. He released the pressure on the old man's neck and said:

"Have you the key to that box?"

"No."

He searched the old man's pockets and found several keys, one of which fitted the lock on the box.

"George—George! Clarissa!" he cried in his agony, whilst the burglar was filling his pockets with the money he found in the box.

When Clarissa came to she heard her step-father groaning at a terrible rate. She scrambled to her feet and gazed around the room.

"Why, where is the robber?" she exclaimed.

"He is gone with my precious gold. Oh, oh, oh!" and the old man's groans were awful to hear.

She got a knife and cut the old man loose, and as soon as he could use his limbs he crawled to the box, looked in, and then began tearing his hair and howling with grief over his loss.

As soon as she could Gerald Graham reported his loss to the proper authorities, and was told that the proper steps to find the robber would be taken. But it was the last he ever heard of the precious gold that was stolen.

One day old Doctor Huntington brought Clarissa a letter. It was from George, telling her that he had found a good situation in the city, and that he would send her a present for her birthday two months hence.

Gerald Graham saw her with the letter, and knew it was from George, and asked her if it was.

"Yes, father," she replied, "he has a situation in the city where he can make a good living."

"Give me his address."

She did so. That day the old man wrote to him to come home.

George wrote back that he would never cross the threshold of Graham Grange again until he

could do so independent of his father in a financial sense.

That made the old man very mad.

"Clarissa!" he cried, "I am going to make my will, and if you will promise me not to give George Graham a dollar of my property I'll make you my heir."

"I'll promise you that, father," she said.

The village lawyer came, drew the will, had it properly signed and witnessed, and, after getting his fee, went away.

That night Gerald Graham died in his sleep, of heart disease, and early the next morning Clarissa telegraphed the fact to George.

He came up on the next train and went up to the house.

Clarissa received him with open arms, and left the sole charge of the funeral with him.

He had the old man decently buried, and the day following the village lawyer told him about the old man's will.

He was thunderstruck.

"Why did you not tell me about the will, Clarissa?" he said a few hours later.

"Because I did not think about it," she said. "It was made in my favor on my promise not to give you a dollar of the estate. I made the promise, of course, reserving the right to sell it to you. You can have the entire property for one dollar. Can you afford to pay so much?"

"Oh, yes," he said, handing her the dollar. "It's mine now, is it?"

"Yes, it's all yours."

"Well, now," and he took her hand in his, "I am going to buy a wife with it. I'll give you the whole estate for your hand in marriage. What say you?"

Woman-like, she had to pretend to faint, and then asked him if he loved her.

He vowed that he did, and a few months later they were married.

BOGUS "BAD MAN" JAILED

Richard P. English, 31 years old, was sent to the workhouse for ten days on a vagrancy charge recently by Magistrate William C. Dodge in the Tombs Court, when a detective told the Court that the man had been proved not to be the bold, bad criminal he had painted himself recently when he surrendered at the station.

English was intoxicated when he told the detective he was a fugitive from Chicago, where, he said, he had swindled a priest out of \$70,000, and that the Cleveland police also had been seeking him in connection with a series of larcenies in fake real estate transactions. A telegram from the Chicago police was to the effect that English was not wanted there. Another telegram from the Cleveland police, he added, said that although a complaint had been lodged against English there some time ago, it had been withdrawn and English was not wanted. The Cleveland police requested, however, that fingerprints of the man be sent.

The prisoner would not comment on the detective's report. The police suspected from the start that the man made his "confession" to obtain free transportation to Chicago or Cleveland.

GOOD READING

"TIGER" CARRIES ON WITH TRADITIONAL GALLANTRY

Georges Clemenceau, "Father of the Victory" secured by the armistice nine years ago, celebrated the anniversary quietly in his apartment here. The Friendly Association of Vendeens in Paris, of which Clemenceau, who has a country retreat on the Vendee coast, is president, called upon him. Two young women in Vendeen costumes gave him flowers.

"Tradition," said the "Tiger," "is that when young ladies offer flowers to an old man he should kiss them. Let us take advantage of tradition." He did.

RIOT TROOPS TO QUELL EXTREMISTS IN FRANCE

A new armed force to handle riots and extremist demonstrations has been established. Troops no longer will be used for this extra policing that is frequently necessary in Paris and other large cities.

Two legions organized into companies like regiments, but otherwise like the gendarmerie, or constabulary, will have contingents in the principal cities ready to go into action at any time.

This force was formed to enable conscripts, now serving only one year instead of three, as formerly, to give all their time to intensive military training.

14 CITIES IN ENGLAND ELECT WOMEN MAYORS

Of the numerous Mayors elected in English and Welsh towns, fourteen of them are women, including Miss Margaret Beavan, Welfare Worker, Lord Mayor of Liverpool.

It is an anomaly in British civil life that women Mayors are not Mayoresses. That title is reserved for the wife or other woman whom the Mayor appoints to assist at social functions.

Thus Mrs. Welsh, the new Mayor of Southampton, appointed her daughter Mayoress to share the social burden of the office.

SAYS MAN USED TOOLS 450,000 YEARS AGO

Man has been an intelligent creature for 450,000 years in the opinion of Dr. K. M. Ami, F. R. S. C., President of the Canadian School of Pre-history in France, who has just returned from abroad with 5,000 specimens illustrating the evolution of man's industrial implements.

Doctor Ami for the past three months has been working in the Mousterian deposits near Bordeaux under special concession by the French Government. When the task of classifying the various implements unearthed is completed, Doctor Ami believes he will be able to piece together a complete story dealing with the evolution of implements used by man for thousands of years.

Tools found while he was excavating indicate to

Doctor Ami that man was not always engaged in fighting and was indeed very industrious in the glacial ages. "Primitive man's dexterity in the manufacture of carving tools and similar instruments is amazing," he said.

MURDERER TAKES BRIDE IN TOMBS

Edward J. Glasser, twenty-seven, sentenced recently in General Sessions to serve twenty years to life imprisonment for the murder of a clerk in the Hotel Charles, Jan. 27 last, was married in the Tombs chapel a few hours after Judge Nott had pronounced his sentence.

The bride was Miss Mary Konkle, eighteen, of No. 204 East 126th street. The ceremony was performed in the presence of Warden Robert Barr, keepers and prisoners, by the Rev. Dr. John T. Wiles, of the Seventh Presbyterian Church, Broome and Ridge streets, and was witnessed by the mothers of the prisoner and the bride.

Mrs. Glasser, accompanied by several girl friends during the wedding, left the prison shortly after the ceremony. Her mother, Mrs. William Konkle, also lives at No. 204 East 126th street.

To obtain a marriage license it was necessary to take a deposition from the prisoner. Glasser, in addition to his sentence, receives an automatic sentence of five years under the Baumes law for having a revolver.

REDS WILL SWEEP EUROPE IN NEXT WAR, SAYS STEED

An American doctrine of peace will do more to end future wars than any other movement in the world to-day, Henry Wickman Steed, former aid to the late Viscount Northcliffe and now editor of the *London Review of Reviews*, declared recently at a meeting of the Buffalo Rotary Club.

Another world war, he said, would mean the spread of Bolshevism over the entire Continent and would find the masses unwilling to fight as they did in 1914.

"The people of England are uncertain what the United States would do if there was a war in Europe," said Mr. Steed. "That is why I advocate a peace doctrine and I have not heard a dissenting voice anywhere in the United States where I have preached my policy. Editors have agreed with me in several cities where I have outlined my theory and I have not received a single objection anywhere in the United States. It is simply this:

"Will America keep its hands entirely free of European affairs, but lay down an American doctrine of peace as fundamental as the Monroe Doctrine, which has influenced international relations for a century? This doctrine would be, in effect, that if any nation engages in a dispute which demands a resort to violence or aggression without having submitted the dispute to some peaceful body or submitted to some peaceful means of adjustment, and if the other nations take steps to penalize the aggressor, will the United States refuse to aid such aggressor in any way?"

CURRENT NEWS

DEER VISITS LUNCHROOM

A young and curious buck deer wandered up Market street, one of the city's business thoroughfares, shortly before dawn recently and plunged through a plate glass entrance to a lunchroom. After capering over tables the deer bounded back through the door into the street, and when last seen was heading toward the country behind Vassar College.

ONE-ARM LUNCHESES MADE THOMPSON
\$6,000,000

From the one-arm lunch room John R. Thompson amassed a fortune of \$6,000,000, an inventory of his estate, filed recently, shows.

The principal item in the will of the late chain restaurant operator is 74,698 shares of capital stock in the John R. Thompson Securities Company, holding company for lunch rooms.

Executors of the estate are John R. Thompson, jr., a son; Henry M. Henrikson and the Commercial Trust and Savings Bank of Chicago.

BRITISH COXEY'S ARMY FOLLOWS
CAESAR'S WAY

Roads built for the war chariots of Julius Caesar led the way for Cook's army of unemployed into Bath recently.

The 400 jobless men collected by A. J. Cook, Secretary of the British Miners' Federation, for a 200 mile march to London was divided into two detachments when it completed its second day's journey. The column separated at lunch time when it proved necessary to serve two messes instead of one from the rolling kitchen that accompanied the men from Wales. The first detachment reached here shortly after 5 o'clock and the other soon after.

Upon arrival the marchers were quartered in halls that had been engaged and placed in readiness by local sympathizers. The hosts served hot meals and arranged for various entertainments, including a dance. Only a few of the younger marchers felt light enough on foot for such athletic amusement after the fifteen mile hike from Bristol.

"IT'S CHILLY OUT," GANG HEAD WARNS
VICTIMS HE LEAVES TROUSERLESS

"Don't catch cold, boys!" was the parting quip of the leader of a gang of five hold-up men who entered the Circolo Terza Italia, and Italian social club headquarters, No. 279 South Sixth street, Newark, recently, and took \$800 in cash and jewelry from the twenty members and then made them remove their trousers to insure the gang's getaway.

The club members, engaged in card games and other diversions, soon after midnight, were suddenly confronted with a sawed-off shotgun in the gang leader's hands, covering them in short arcs. In no time at all their own hands shot upward, while the shotgun holder stationed one of his men at the door and ordered the members into a back room. There, they were frisked by the other three robbers.

"Now take off your pants," commanded the leader. Embarrassed and afraid they might be shot if they lowered their hands, the members hesitated. But, reassured by "I won't shoot you if you behave," they complied.

Then the leader, laughing, mixed up the trousers with his shotgun and sauntered out of the club with his henchmen, only stopping at the door for a warning it was chilly outside.

When one of the members finally had found his trousers and summoned police, the hold-up men had made good their escape.

TO BAR WOMEN IN CHOIRS

The Right Rev. William A. Hickey has suggested to pastors of Roman Catholic churches in the Providence Diocese that they gradually eliminate women from their parish choirs. The Bishop's suggestion was based on a decree of Pius X. issued in 1908, which condemned the use of female singers in church services. Lack of enough male singers was given as the reason for failure to eliminate the women hitherto.

A representative of the Catholic Church said that only male choristers were employed during the middle ages, but that after the Reformation female voices were introduced into church music and parts were written especially for them.

The revival of the plain chant came early in this century, when Pius X. took the part of the exclusive male choir, although he tolerated the presence of female singers under special circumstances.

DRUG WHOLESALERS PLEDGE SUPPORT
TO PROHIBITION

Support of Dr. J. M. Doran as prohibition commissioner "in the strict enforcement of the prohibition laws," is one of the chief purposes of a program of activities, centering on research, adopted by the National Wholesale Druggists' Association, according to Sewell Cutler, of Boston, whose election as president of the association was announced recently through the Drug Trade Bureau of Public Information, 51 Maiden Lane.

"The association," Mr. Cutler said in making public plans to develop fair practices in trade, "will enter actively into the development of a platform of business principles which we believe constitute sound economics and fair trade practice and which we hope may serve as a guide to the entire drug industry."

Mr. Cutler made public a letter from President Coolidge which said: "Trade organizations, inspired by high motives and properly managed, can be of great benefit not only to their members, but to the public as well."

The attitude of Secretary of Commerce Hoover is declared in a resolution to be constructive and sympathetic toward trade associations. In controlling credit and collections, the association will foster preventive rather than curative measures, it was announced. It has been proposed to watch not only business expenditures of the merchants who buy, but also their personal and domestic outlays.

PLUCK AND LUCK

—Latest Issues—

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